Community College Partnerships with Business and Industry

Maryann Sharpley Lavendar
Western Michigan University

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS
WITH BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

by

Maryann Sharpley Lavendar

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology
Dr. Charles Warfield, Advisor

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
June 2007
DEDICATION

I dedicate the efforts of this research to the memory of my father, Mirl Chatman Sharpley, Sr. I take pleasure in remembering life lessons of integrity, strength of character, and courage.

I dedicate the process of completing this research to my husband and friend, Kevin James Lavender, Sr. I am blessed to experience his love, encouragement, and unwavering support from beginning to end.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writing of a dissertation can be a lonely and isolating experience, yet it is rarely achieved without having the support of a community of people. First and foremost, engaging in doctoral work provided me with numerous opportunities to see and know the Lord, my God in a much greater light than I ever would. He provided me with all the tools and relationships necessary to complete this project; some of which were actual miracles!

I would like to thank my dissertation committee beginning with my chair, Dr. Charles Warfield, a man who epitomizes in breadth and depth of character the heart and actions of a committed educator. I sincerely appreciate Dr. Andrea Beach who embodies the word “scholarship” and models the posture and poise of excellence. I am grateful to Dr. Jon Couture for agreeing to join the committee as a visiting scholar, and who personifies professional mentorship by providing me with guidance and exposure along the way.

Members of my cohort, who also became my friends, and now ready resources in the field of higher education; Betty Dennis, Deveta Gardner, Larry and Antoinette Gray, Jennifer O’Donoghue, Donald Knight, Sharon Peterson, Glinda Rawls, LaSonda Wells, and Margaret Wiedenhorf. I owe a special note of gratitude to Maxine Gilling who introduced me to the doctoral program, and has provided me with endless words of affirmation and encouragement. I am especially thankful to Dr.
Acknowledgments – Continued

Jessie Grant, whose daily “check-ins” ensured that I did not stop writing until my Committee Chair said, “We would like to introduce to you…” at my defense.

There are movers and shakers who worked behind the scenes on my behalf to remove barriers, and provide me with one of the richest experiences a graduate student could possibly have: Diane Bourgeois and Lynda Root (The Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology); Barb Cline (Research); Tony Dennis (Graduate College), and Dr. Martha Warfield (Division of Multicultural Affairs).

The Bible Baptist Church played a significant role in the dissertation process as effectual and fervent prayer warriors, and stood in the gap for and with my family and me when life’s circumstances became heavy. I am forever grateful to you all.

Family is priceless! I acknowledge deep appreciation to all extended members of my family whose names are too many to list, but include brothers, sisters, parents, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, cousins, and in-laws. Special recognition is given to my sister, Renee for her readiness to aid in areas of advice, and was a constant source of comfort and encouragement. Renee is an excellent proof-reader, and editor. My educational and professional successes have always included her expertise.

Writing a dissertation encompasses the family. The need to interact with the writing process is with you all of the time. When you arise in the morning, while you sleep through the night, it is on your mind through family, fun, and crisis events. It is
through their patience, understanding, and ability to tolerate constant intrusions in home life that enables a writer to complete such a task. For this, I am indebted to my four adult children; Kevin, Jr., Jennifer, Jeffrey, and Kandace who have been real troopers along this educational journey.

I acknowledge the most important person in my life, my husband Kevin Lavender, Sr. Thank you for your quiet sacrifices of love, and the contributions that you made that are unknown to most for this achievement in my life to be possible! For over 26 years, you have lived your vow “…for better or for worse... to love, honor, and cherish...” You are the love of my life!

It is my desire that this accomplishment be received by my family as a first generation triumph for us all. May it serve as a cognitive device that alerts our senses to the reality that the only barriers preventing the achievement of higher education for future generations in our family are the ones that we erect in our own lives.

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

Jude 1:24 & 25

Maryann Sharpley Lavender
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS................................................................................................ ii
LIST OF TABLES............................................................................................................ x
CHAPTER
I. INTRODUCTION........................................................................................................ 1
   Community Colleges.................................................................................. 3
   Economic Challenges................................................................................. 5
   Workforce Development............................................................................ 6
   Community College and Industry Partnerships............................... 6
   Resource Dependency................................................................................ 8
   Problem Statement..................................................................................... 10
   Research Questions.................................................................................... 11
   Significance of the Study............................................................................ 12
      Contribution to Research on Community College-Industry Partnerships........................................................................................................................................................................ 12
      Contribution to Policy, Organization, and Administration of Community College-Industry Partnerships.......................................................... 13
   Assumptions................................................................................................ 13
   Delimitations and Limitations................................................................... 14
   Organization of the Dissertation............................................................... 15
   Summary..................................................................................................... 16
II. LITERATURE REVIEW......................................................................................... 17
   Introduction................................................................................................ 17
   21st Century Community College: Its Role in Economic Development................................................................................................................. 18
   Community Colleges: Instruments for Workforce Development........... 20
Table of Contents – continued

CHAPTER

Economic Challenges: Shifting Aid to Secondary Institutions.............. 23
Workforce Development Defined............................................................ 25
Resource Dependency Theory............................................................... 27
Current Research on Workforce Development and Partnerships in Community Colleges............................................................ 31
Summary.................................................................................................... 33

III. METHODOLOGY..................................................................................... 35

Research Design Rationale.................................................................... 35
Case Study Research Method.................................................................. 37
Data Collection.......................................................................................... 39
Instrumentation.......................................................................................... 42
Document Review...................................................................................... 44
Data Management and Analysis............................................................. 45
Interview Protocols.................................................................................. 46
Data Presentation and Reliability............................................................. 47
Summary.................................................................................................... 47

IV. CASE STUDY RESULTS............................................................................ 49

Case Results............................................................................................. 50
Rural Community College Partnership Case........................................ 50
Rural Community....................................................................................... 50
Rural Community College........................................................................ 51
Rural Business Partner............................................................................. 51
Strategic Goals for Partnership............................................................... 52
Partnership Objectives............................................................................. 56
Formal Documents.................................................................................... 58
Partnership Benefits................................................................................. 63
Table of Contents – continued

CHAPTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Challenges</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in Partnership Dynamics and Lessons Learned</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development and Partnerships</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Rural Community College Partnership</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Community College Partnership Case</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Community</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Community College</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Business Partner</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Goals for Partnership</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Objectives</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Documents</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Benefits</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Challenges</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in Partnership Dynamics and Lessons Learned</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development and Partnerships</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Suburban Community College Partnership</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Community College Partnership Case</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Community</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Community College</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Business Partner</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Goals for Partnership</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Objectives</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Documents</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Benefits</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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# Table of Contents – continued

## CHAPTER

- Partnership Challenges ................................................................. 101
- Economic Development ................................................................. 102
- Summary of Urban Community College Partnership ................. 104
- Chapter Summary ........................................................................ 105
- Emergent Themes ....................................................................... 106

## V. SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH, AND CONCLUSIONS ............................................................. 111

- Overall Summary .......................................................................... 112
- Review of Emergent Themes ....................................................... 112
- Mission ...................................................................................... 112
- State Aid Dependency .................................................................. 115
- Relationship through Entrepreneurship ...................................... 117
- Workforce Development ............................................................... 121
- Challenges and Lessons ............................................................... 122
- Implications for Practice .............................................................. 123
- Recommendations for Further Study ........................................... 125
- Chapter Summary ........................................................................ 127
- Summary .................................................................................... 128

## REFERENCES .................................................................................. 130

## APPENDICES

- A. Industry Interview Guide .......................................................... 150
- B. Community College Interview Guide ........................................ 151
- C. Email Correspondence to Potential Community College Participants 152
- D. Email Correspondence to Potential Industry Participants .......... 154
- E. Consent to Participate in Study .................................................. 156
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPENDICES</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F. Document Review Request</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Interview Reminder</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Verification of Interview Completion</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. HSIRB Approval Letter</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

1. Pseudonym Assignment and Title Identification.......................... 41
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the 1980s the emergence of school reform initiated changes that transformed the nature of education and business partnerships (Grobe, 1993). During this time, community colleges were faced with the demand of educational reform that would better prepare students for the higher order thinking and reasoning skills required in an increasingly knowledge-based and service-driven economy. Businesses were faced with the threat of an inadequately prepared work force that would jeopardize their competition with other peer and competing industries.

Motivated to improve the academic and technical skills of the future work force, businesses and schools joined in partnerships of various sizes and types to achieve their common and separate goals (Stamps, 1995). Partnerships referred to in this study are categorized as a formalized, legal set of arrangements laid out in a written agreement whereby a college and a company or companies enter into a joint venture with each contributing some specified value to the common enterprise and each hoping to obtain some benefits. Ongoing transformations in the job market as a result of increasing and intense economic globalization economy meant that experienced workers must continually upgrade their skills or face a greater possibility of displacement or marginalization in the labor market (Workforce Economics, 2001).
In 1990, less than half of the nation’s community colleges offered training programs in conjunction with local businesses. In fact, employers’ support of the educational efforts of their employees is especially important as the premium on skills continue to grow (Grogger & Eide, 1995). By the mid 1990s, roughly 90 percent of two-year colleges had joined “the business of training workers for specific companies, rather than just teaching generic subjects or trades” (Meister, 1998).

Economic recession and stagnated state revenues painted a grim forecast of limited progression, and in many states, major cuts in state appropriations for higher education. State budget cuts reached the point where the vital mission of the colleges was being dramatically affected (Gaines, 2002). Consequently, community colleges, like other institutions of higher education responded to decreasing state support by increasing tuition, and by cutting academic programs, staff and faculty and delaying major purchases or capital investments.

Managing the partnership between Higher Education and industry does not ask if such alliances should be formed, but rather how we can better develop and manage them (Hunt, 1995). Using the term industry refers to a business or a corporation involved in the production or research and development of goods and services. Workforce skills have taken on greater economic value for organizations (Bills & Wacker, 2003). (Carducci, 2004). Community college partnerships with the public and private sector have become increasingly popular as they have expanded their relationships to include partners in business and industry (Forde, 2002).
Several factors have contributed to the popularity of community college partnerships with business and industry. Many states have experienced severe budget cuts while still meeting more critical expenses. This resulted in a reduction of state funding for institutions of higher education (Hebel, Schmidt, & Selingo, 2002; Hoachlander, 2003; Horn & Sikora, 2003; Trombley, 2003). As a consequence, community colleges have had to look elsewhere for financial support, and private sector partnerships have emerged as an increasingly important source of postsecondary funding (Jackson & Glass, 2000).

In addition, evolving labor requirements, particularly in high technology areas, have influenced the creation of community college relationships with local business and industry. Through partnerships with small and mid-sized businesses, community colleges have been extremely successful in helping high technology economies grow and become more competitive (Regional Technology Strategies, 1999).

Community Colleges

Community colleges have endured economic challenges in funding, and increased enrollment issues in the 20th century. They have thrived by demonstrating noteworthy pliability and becoming centers of educational opportunity open to all seekers (Dougherty, 2001). The community college sector has proven its ability to achieve job skill enhancement by creating market-specific certification programs for workforce development (Cantor, 2002).

In 2001, America’s community colleges celebrated their centennial (American Association of Community Colleges, 2004b). At last count, there were 1,166...
community colleges in the United States, including public, private, and tribal institutions (American Association of Community Colleges, 2004b). Community colleges educated more than half the nation's undergraduates, who represented 11.6 million students, of which 6.6 million were enrolled for credit, and 5 million were enrolled in noncredit programs (American Association of Community Colleges, 2004b). Very large percentages of the nation's underrepresented populations were served through community colleges. 47% of Black undergraduate students, 56% of Hispanic, 48% of Asian/Pacific Islander, and 57% of Native American descent attended community colleges (American Association of Community Colleges, 2004b). Since 1901, at least 100 million people have attended community colleges (Vaughn, 2000).

Included in the mission of community colleges was a focus on serving all segments of society through an open-access admissions policy that offers equal and fair treatment to all students; comprehensive educational programs serving local community needs; a sole focus on teaching; and lifelong learning (American Association of Community Colleges, 2004b). The evolution of higher education continuously emphasizes the value of credentialed versus non-credentialed knowledge and skill (American Association of Community Colleges, 2004b).

For the greater part of their earlier years, community colleges focused on general liberal arts studies, including granting associate degrees for traditional college-level courses (Kasper, 2003; Sullivan, 2005). Today, community colleges
also direct their focus to the workforce development needs of their communities through industry partnerships (Leigh & Molitor, 2005).

Economic Challenges

In 2002, higher education faced an uncertain economic future that was negatively affected by powerful spending pressures from rapid Medicaid growth and other health costs, causing a decline in educational funding. As a result of this recession, state treasuries faced revenue weaknesses that will directly impact higher education funding indefinitely, with no immediate end in sight (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2002).

The 2005 United States Presidential budget announcement created challenges for education on two fronts; the first being a substantial reduction in the Pell grant program. Secondly and more importantly was the commitment to continue Community-Based Job Training Grants (CBJTG). This competitive grant program builds on the High Growth Job Training Initiative, a national model for demand-driven workforce development implemented by strategic partnerships among the workforce investment system, employers, and community colleges (www.doleta.gov). The primary purpose of Community-Based Job Training Grants is to build the capacity of community colleges to train workers in the skills required to succeed in high growth, high demand industries. Partnerships are increasingly becoming an integral strategic element in community college operations and illustrate one way in which colleges, businesses, and the community can be bound together for mutual benefit (Spangler, 2002).
Workforce Development

Community College and Industry Partnerships

Although community college partnerships with industry are not a new concept in workforce development, research gaps in the literature require the use and application of seminal work recorded older than ten years to enable this study. Partnerships between higher education and private business are not new concepts for the twenty-first century (Fairweather, 1989). In 1988, The Nationwide Commission on the Future of Community Colleges recommended that community colleges help build communities by creating partnerships with employers and making facilities available for workforce training (http://ncrve.berkely.edu/OtherSites.html).

From the perspective of employers, workers need to update their knowledge and skills in order to adapt to rapid technological changes in the workplace, while at the same time gaining intellectual enrichment (Gumport & Chun, 1999). As a result, a sizeable responsibility is placed on community colleges to provide workforce development solutions for industry in order to help ensure employability for the American people (Laanan & Cohen, 1997; Thomas & Wagner, 2000). Jacobs (2000) defines workforce development as the coordination of school, company, and governmental policies and programs such that as a collective they enable individuals the opportunity to realize a sustainable livelihood and organizations to achieve exemplary goals, consistent with the history, culture, and goals of the societal context).
Research conducted by both academic and government sectors suggests that the training provided to workers during the twentieth century was not sufficient enough to ensure a future workforce with the skills needed to foster economic growth and improved living standards (Regional Technology Strategies, 1999). Workforce skills required by business and industry for the twenty-first century are substantially different than those necessary only a few years ago (Bassi & Van Buren, 1999; Drucker, 1999). Relevant to these differences from an industry perspective is the dramatic increase of its focus on knowledge and learning in organizations. Specifically, industry is focusing on building “learning organizations” that continuously expand their capacity to create, innovate, and emphasize continuous learning (Overtoom, 2000).

The demand for a wider range of academic disciplines to develop curricula that address the specific skills and knowledge that employers want and expect in future employees has arrived (Giloth, 2000). Challenges to higher education leaders include the necessity to involve their business counterparts in educational partnerships. The intent of the partnerships was to provide the ability to discuss and incorporate real-world educational experiences into college courses, and to identify and fill the breach that exists between the needs of corporations and the education that postsecondary institutions provide (Pollitt, 2002). Community colleges have been more responsive than any other postsecondary sector to the wider community’s workforce needs (Kasper, 2003). Included in this newer dimension of higher education is the need for corporations to provide advanced skill attainment for their
workers as they seek to become “learning organizations” while improving work-life culture (Wonacott, 2003).

Community college and industry partnerships have been somewhat limited in purpose, many having been created to give business the opportunity to reap benefits from the intellectual capital available on a college campus (Jones, 2003). Corporations are placing a higher premium on education where learning and the management of knowledge is becoming a more valued commodity (Palloff & Pratt, 2003). The need for forward thinking and upgraded training in technical fields has made continuing education a natural bridge between business and higher education (Kasper, 2003). Simply put, entrepreneurship among community colleges brings workforce, economic, and community development to the geographies, people, and industries they serve. For higher education institutions that want to work with global corporations, the challenge has been to move beyond the limitations of traditional campuses and regional service foci (Clinton, 2004) to a more comprehensive vision.

Resource Dependency

Resource dependency theory has been proposed by organizational theorists to explain organizations in terms of their interdependence with their environment (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Pugh & Hickson, 1997; Scott, 1992). Resource dependency theory conceptualizes organizations as interdependent with their environments or other organizations for their survival. Because organizations are not self-directed and self-dependent (Pugh & Hickson, 1997), they need resources for their survival. These resources include money, materials, personnel, information, and
technology. The degree or extent of this resource dependency varies from one organization to another. For example, a manufacturing organization will have dependence on the outside environment for raw materials and unskilled labor, while another organization in the same industry may depend on the quality and availability of trained personnel.

The most important resource for any organization is money; without it in some form, no organization would survive. Capital alone cannot solve organizational problems as they also require a free flow of information that enables them to make critical and strategic decisions. Resources, including money, materials, equipment, personnel, technology, and information are important ingredients that all organizations need to effectively operate. If any of these ingredients are absent or lacking within the organization, the organization must interact with others who control those resources (Pugh & Hickson, 1997; Ulrich & Barney, 1984). Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) think that interdependence with others lies in the availability of resources and the demand for them.

Resource dependency theory can apply to community college and industry partnerships in a two ways. From the academic and industry collaborative perspective, partnerships enable community colleges to create academic and technical training that responds to the high tech labor needs in the community (Swindle, 1999) in response to economic needs. As a result, these partnerships have emerged as an increasingly important source of funding (Jackson & Glass, 2000) for post secondary education institutions. Second, and equally important, from the workforce
development perspective, local businesses rely on community colleges to provided a ready, capable, and skilled labor force (Jackson & Glass, 2000), and to continually upgrade the skills of workers.

Problem Statement

From the limited research on community college partnerships with industry, we know that partnerships are not a new concept, and the formation of collaborative partnerships with other organizations is an attempt to reduce community colleges' heavy reliance on local, state, and federal governmental funding (Baker & Imber, 1999; Coburn, 1989; Gold & Charner, 1986; Johnstone, 1994; Leslie & Fretwell, 1996; Lovell, 2000; Meister, 1998). The reduction in government financial support, whether great or small, creates a challenge for institutions of higher education to fulfill the needs of their constituents (Hopkins, Wendel, 1997; Rouche & Rouche, 1999), thereby straining the global mission of community colleges to build a nation of learners (American Association of Community Colleges, 2004b).

Community colleges are poised to make rapid changes to their curricula to meet changing business community needs (Eddy, 2003). As governmental funding for higher education diminishes, these institutions need to create other means of financial support (American Association of Community Colleges, 2004b). We also know that community college and industry partnerships include a wide range of disciplines that largely focus on workforce development issues and re-tooling industry workers for continued employment and promotability (Olsen, 2006).
However, the limited studies in higher education that investigate the value and outcomes of community college partnerships with industry comprise a research gap. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to describe, analyze and interpret the expectations and outcomes of community college partnerships with industry to determine their value, emerging themes that have contributed to their success or demise, and whether the goals initially set forth in establishing these partnerships has been achieved.

Research Questions

The research questions used to guide this study are

1. What are the strategic goals and objectives for both entities (community college and corporation) leading to the partnership?
   a. What needs was the partnership established to address?
   b. What were the formalized issues listed in the agreement that brought about the partnerships?

2. How are the partnerships working for the community college? For the corporate partner?
   a. What were and are they getting out of it?
   b. What are the benefits?
   c. What aspects are not working well?
   d. What dynamics of these partnerships would the two partners change?
3. What lessons for future partnerships can be learned from the experiences of these existing partnerships?

4. How does resource dependency play a role in maintaining partnerships?

The research questions were addressed through a multi-institutional qualitative case study. The case study was developed through interviews with key informants in both community colleges and the corporations with which they partner, site visits, and document analysis. The analytical lens and conceptual frame of the study was Resource Dependency Theory. This study analyses whether and how partnerships with industry and business sustain community colleges as well as the partnering industries.

Significance of the Study

This study has a number of significant contributions to the field of post-secondary education-industry relations. These are examined from the following contexts: contribution to research in this field in general, contribution to research in institutional context, and contribution to policy, organization, and administration of the college-industry training partnerships.

Contribution to Research on Community College-Industry Partnerships

It is noted in the preceding sections of this chapter that although the field of college-industry partnerships has a long history; their re-emergence and emphasis is a fairly recent phenomenon. It is expected that this study can contribute current and
detailed findings to the field of knowledge in the area of postsecondary-industry partnerships, and their value to industry and higher education institutions.

**Contribution to Policy, Organization, and Administration of Community College-Industry Partnerships**

This study has both a theoretical and practical value. Given the importance attached to postsecondary-industry relations for achieving the benefits that are expected to accrue from these relationships, further research should be done on how these partnerships evolve and function and what factors contribute to their success. The study will also provide insights into the nature of these relationships and any problems that may be associated with them. The outcome of this research should be of interest to institution administrators and researchers to help identify what best practices are when establishing these linkages, including the ability to understand what precautions should be considered.

The perspectives of those involved in collaborative ventures should guide policy makers and administrators in government. Involvement should also include the community college and the private sector in addressing the concerns and aspirations of those affected. Hopefully, this research will lead to a better understanding of these relations and consequently to better organized and managed partnerships. In the same vein, then, the study has policy implications for the organization and management of these relationships.

**Assumptions**

The following assumptions were made in developing this research project:
1. The conceptual framework (Chapter 2) provides a useful starting point for exploring some of the dimensions of community college-industry partnerships.

2. The institutional/corporate administrators and researchers who were interviewed possess the necessary information required for purposes of this study and they felt free to share this information, even that which is critical of partnerships.

3. A case study design, using semi-structured interviews and document analysis, is an appropriate method for the purpose of this inquiry.

4. Higher education-industry partnerships provide a positive contribution to both sectors and society at large, and therefore merit closer exploration.

5. The study will make a contribution to the field of knowledge on higher education-industry relations.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

The community colleges researched in this study have many activities relating to interactions with industry that the study could not cover. The study will therefore be delimited to the following:

1. Three Midwest community colleges were selected for this study of industry partnerships.

2. Community college interviewees were mainly drawn from the workforce development fields since that is where most of the collaborative partnerships with industry take place and the area in which industry seeks workforce development solutions.
3. The study was also delimited to detailed examination of three selected partnerships as case examples rural, suburban, and metropolitan (urban) community college was chosen to explore differences based on community.

This study was limited by the following factors:

a. This study brings out only the perspectives and experiences of those who were decision makers and institutional strategists for partnership collaboration, and these people tend to be advocates for community college-industry cooperation.

b. The study is limited by the extent of the knowledge and ability of the respondents to recall their experiences and verbalize them succinctly.

c. In qualitative research, a sizeable amount of data is generated and decisions were made as to what is included in the research report. As a result, there may be some information left out of the report that could have added to the quality of the report.

Organization of the Dissertation

In order to provide navigation for this research report, the following organization of the remainder of this dissertation is used. Chapter Two contains the literature review on higher education-industry collaboration and its historical development in the United States in particular. The primary purpose of the literature review is to inform the reader on what is known about industry partnerships, the different forms these partnerships have taken, their benefits, and the problems and the challenges they have face. Also included in Chapter Two is a detailed discussion of
the theoretical framework relevant to this research, which is provided to understand
the lens within which the research was conceived and carried out.

Chapter Three is a description of the research design and the methods used in
collecting and analyzing the data for the study. Additionally, Chapter Three builds
upon the literature review to establish a conceptual framework and more
comprehensive set of research questions. Chapter Four represents the results of the
case study research and the themes that emerged. Chapter Five provides a summary
of this research as it relates to current literature and emergent themes, as well as
recommendations for future study.

Summary

Community colleges are centers for educational opportunities. Their open
access equips these institutions with flexibility to serve all people and all needs,
including business and industry. Program offerings of community colleges include
academic, vocational and technical training to equip ready workers for the workforce.
Federal and state funding for community college education decreased causing a
shortage of revenue, and placing greater a burden on leaders to determine faculty,
staff and program quality.

Business and industries were always met with the challenge of obtaining and
maintaining qualified employees to meet the demands of the workplace. Inquiry into
community college and industry partnerships for education and training, their value
for the college and the corporation, and the partnerships' ability to achieve expected
outcomes is of great concern and an appropriate and timely topic for deeper research.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe, analyze and interpret the expectations and outcomes of community college partnerships with business and industry partnerships. The goal will be to determine their value, emerging themes that have contributed to their success or demise, and whether the goals initially set forth in establishing these partnerships was achieved.

The literature relative to community college and industry partnerships is limited. The literature does describe key factors that promote the success and endurance of these partnerships. Yet, the literature requires more depth to explore the rules and norms that influence the nature of community college and industry partnerships. Sizeable gaps in the literature were identified in the areas (i.e., how partnerships are working, and what are common components that make them work well) and eras (i.e., from 1980 to present) where community colleges transitioned to comprehensive and entrepreneurial learning communities for workforce development. Definitions relative to community college types (i.e., rural, suburban, and urban) are not explained in literature. According to the National Center of Education Statistics, these types of descriptive labels are imposed and embraced by the institutions
themselves relative to the mission statements and geographical impact each institution offers to the communities they service.

Since the research literature relative to community college and industry partnerships is limited, research was extended to include business journals and futuristic periodicals. Business and industry literature was accessed in order to help understand the history of partnerships and bridge the gap to current day relationships and their contributions to economic and workforce development. Educational journals were researched for theoretical constructs.

This chapter a) provides an overview of the 21st Century community college its role in economic development, b) defines workforce development, c) identifies the characteristics of community colleges as instruments for workforce development and, the benefits businesses and industries gain when joining with post secondary institutions to develop workforce solutions and interventions, and d) defines the theoretical construct of Resource Dependency, its relationship to economic development, and its utility in framing the community college and industry partnership.

21st Century Community College: Its Role in Economic Development

Community colleges have not received the attention they deserve (Doughtery, 2001). Some believe that as community colleges enter their second century of service, their role as engines of economic development emerge to the forefront of developing innovative strategies for meeting current and future workforce development requirements (Wagner, 2000). These two-year colleges play a crucial
role in American higher education and, indeed, American life as they have become a powerful learning nexus for regional workforce development opportunities, as well as an essential educational player in cities, counties, and states (Dougharty & Bakia, 1999; Dougherty, 2001; Drury; 2001; Forde, 2002; Levin, 1999; Milliron & Wilson, 2004; Tollefson, 1998).

In the 100 years since their creation, community colleges have spread across the United States to become the largest sector of higher education, representing nearly 1,166 regionally accredited institutions within commuting distance of over 90 percent of the population (American Association of Community Colleges, 2004b). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, for-credit student enrollment in community colleges has grown to over 6.5 million; almost half (45%) of the total number of undergraduates in the United States. When non-credit students are added to the 6.5 million, more than 11.5 million students take classes at community colleges each year (ncrve.berkely.edu/OtherSites.htm).

The focus of community colleges has changed little in 100 years, and encompasses degree granting, vocational and technical training, and economic development (Drury, 2001). However, content of programs has been redirected with a new prominence on workforce and economic development, including the traditional degree and certificate offerings (Drury 2001). Over the last decade, many community colleges have increased their work with local business and industry through partnerships and customized training contracts (Dougherty & Bakia, 1999). Decreasing finances present the most salient reason for the involvement of higher
educational institutions in commercial endeavors (ncrve.berkely.edu/OtherSites.htm).

Because of the escalating demands for student access along with reduced finances, a number of colleges and universities are adopting more aggressive approaches to economic development (Leslie & Slaughter, 1997).

Unlike universities which face the challenges of institutional prestige that frequently rests on research and the resources it brings to the institution, community colleges are most concerned engrossed with the employability of students (Dohm & Wyatt, 2002). Employability refers to the capacity of an individual to get a job and retain it (Dohm & Wyatt, 2002). Because of this overarching focus, community colleges key players in developing technology parks, hosting small business incubators, offering entrepreneurship development, partnering in business recruitment and conducting assessment and certification testing (Doughtery, 2001).

Community Colleges: Instruments for Workforce Development

Community colleges' historic involvement in economic and workforce development has been well documented (United States Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2003). Community colleges provide opportunities for students to earn two-year associate degrees or to transfer to four-year institution; provide the ability for adult learners to obtain continuing education; provide new and existing workers with vocational training through certification and specialization programs (Ballantyne, 1985; Beder, Keen, & Nickoli 2003; Carter, 2000; Sheets, 1992; Tucker, 1994).
While community colleges continue to serve these three functions, there is increased interest in the role that they play in workforce development (Morest, 2004). Grubb (1996) posits “Community colleges have a major responsibility for preparing the nation’s current and future mid-skilled workforce, which accounts for three-fourths of all employees in the United States.” The American Association of Community Colleges echoes this assertion, “It falls to us, the workforce and community college professionals of this country to provide training in the skills needed to succeed in the dynamic economy” (http://www.aacc.nche.edu).

National statistics show that community colleges currently certify nearly 80% of the nation’s first responders (fire fighters, police officers, paramedics, and EMTs) and prepare most of the nation’s health care workers, including more than 50% of the nation’s registered nurses (Patton, 2000). A growing number of community colleges are offering programs in teacher preparation in response to current and projected shortages (Allen, 2002). Community college students are generally less mobile and remain in local communities (Rosenfeld, 2006).

Community colleges have considerable experience working with non-traditional students. A non-traditional student has been defined as anyone who is not a teenager between the ages of 13 and 18 years, who has not just graduated high school, but is returning to the classroom after some period of time in which his/her formal education was interrupted (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Horn 1996). Community colleges cater to vocational career tracks, and having this ability may be easier with non-credit or customized job training areas of the community college rather than
relying solely on the academic orientation (Dohm & Wyatt, 2002). Generally noted, students seek certificates, diplomas, and degrees in credit and non-credit areas: college transfer, terminal and transfer technical programs, vocational training, workforce development programs and industry, workforce development programs with displaced workers, basic skills and remedial programs, adult basic education and GED, senior programs, and vocational noncredit programs (Milliron & Wilson, 2004).

The need for 21st century community colleges to become flexible, market-responsive providers of postsecondary education, worker retraining and certification, and continuing education stems from the need for ever-evolving job skills in a continually changing work environment (MacAllum, Poliakoff, & Yoder, 2004). As the demand for skilled labor grows, market-responsible community colleges with high-quality career-oriented programs are able to anticipate local community needs, secure contracts to custom-build programs for employers, deliver courses and credentials that align with current and future workplace needs, and accurately evaluate training outcomes (MacAllum, Poliakoff, & Yoder, 2004). Workforce development requires a variety of educational and training programs. The first area would consist of training employees at particular organizations or contract services. In this case, the employer is the customer, not the student (Drury, 2001).

Businesses continue to report that employees enter the workplace without the skills necessary for today's jobs (Fischer, 2005; Bos, Hamilton, Scrivener, & Snipes, 2002; McIntire & McLester, 2006).
Corporations can play a key role in ensuring that all students receive a high quality, world class education so that they will be adequately prepared for the 21st century (Giroux, 2001). Companies need workers who can adapt to the changing workforce. Corporations realize that employees are their greatest asset and number one resource (Noelle, 2006). "The community colleges are very well adapted to meeting the needs of local employers. They're flexible, they're able to say to an employer, what do you need, and we'll educate the people for the kind of workers you need" (Office of the Press Secretary, 2004).

The last annually reported cost of employer-provided training was $30 billion (Hirshberg, 1991). In 1994 the Bureau of Labor Statistics launched an assessment of employer-paid training using a per employee calculation of $12 contribution to outside training; $98 employee outside training; $51 – tuition; reimbursement; $98 – inside training. Some of these training dollars were used to address remedial needs of workers to increase literacy and raise the basic skills competencies.

Economic Challenges: Shifting Aid to Secondary Institutions

Shifting proportions of revenue from local taxes, state aid, federal aid, and tuition have marked the funding of two-year colleges over the years. For example, for the years 1918, 1950, and 1999, revenues from local sources such as property taxes declined from 94%, to 49%, to 18%, respectively (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Vaughan, 2000). In 1918, no state aid was provided to public two-year institutions, but by 1950 and 1999 states were contributing 26% and 39%, respectively, to community college budgets (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Vaughan, 2000). Federal aid to community colleges
was just 1% in 1950, but it grew to 13% in 1999 (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Vaughan, 2000). Reliance on tuition and fees increased between 1929 and 1968 (Lombardi, 1976), although tuition was low as a proportion of all revenues (Hovey, 1999), and remains so today (Carducci, 2004).

Because community colleges were created in part to make higher education financially accessible to the general population, it has been necessary for their primary funding to come from sources other than tuition and fees. Although current information about community college revenue sources is limited, it appears that costs and funding patterns have changed in recent years. Harvey, Williams, Kirshstein, O'Malley, and Wellman (1998) and Watkins (2000) reported that for public two-year college subsidies declined from federal and state governments since the late 1999’s to present.

Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Finance Surveys for the years 1989 through 1994 found that while community colleges experienced a loss of governmental appropriations per student, the average community college made up for this decline through increased revenue from tuition and fees and governmental grants and contracts.

Community College partnerships with business and industry do create a revenue stream for the institution. The unknown dollar value that these partnerships generate does create a gap in the research. The Economic and Workforce Development (EWD) Program of the California community colleges that functions as a critical role in its State’s economic recovery collected data from the community
colleges. The EWD Program has measured the volumes of customers and outcomes, and has summarized its annual statewide averages. Some of the key indicators for the program include:

- 97,000 students enrolled in courses developed by the program;
- 90,000 incumbent workers trained;
- 52,000 businesses served;
- $40 million in revenue generated through contract education;
- 7,000 job placements;
- 2,700 jobs created;
- 4,800 jobs retained; and
- 700 courses developed in emerging technologies (California Performance Report, 2003).

Workforce Development Defined

Despite the level of its emerging prominence, workforce development is not an exhaustive topic of research (Hawley & Jacobs, in press), including definition and application. By way of definition and use of this term, researchers, education practitioners, and policy makers from diverse disciplines are using the term “workforce development” liberally and frequently without appropriate discussion about its meaning and implications for established fields of study (Giloth, 2000; Grubb, 1999; Harrison & Weiss, 1998). For instance, Harrison and Weiss (1998) state that workforce development consists of a constellation of activities from orientation to the work world, recruiting, placement, and mentoring, to follow-up counseling and
crisis intervention. They assert that training is but one element of workforce development. This definition is consistent with the perspective of the Urban Institute, which supports the idea that workforce development systems provide a broad range of employment and training services, as well as targeted assistance to employers (Pindus, Martin, Robin, & Trutko, 2000).

Similarly, the National Governors' Association defines workforce development as the education, employment, and job-training efforts designed to help employers achieve a skilled workforce and individuals to succeed in the workplace. Grubb (1999) contends that workforce development provides individuals with the occupational preparation necessary for employment, including technical, basic, and academic competencies.

In practice, workforce development is often used in connection with career and technical education, which has generally replaced vocational education in the U.S. Workforce development consists of training programs that prepare adult students for today's workforce. These programs serve adult learners by preparing them for employment in a variety of industries that require well-developed technical skills. Additional workforce development efforts are focused on providing skills maintenance and enhancement through continuing education to those already employed, and retraining for displaced workers.

Clearly, since no definition assumes a sufficiently integrated perspective of working and learning, Hawley and Jacobs (in press) proposed the following definition
for workforce development, that is also adapted for use in this body of research because of its relevance to economic, social, and political dimensions:

Workforce development is the coordination of school, company, and governmental policies and programs such that as a collective they enable individuals the opportunity to realize a sustainable livelihood and organizations to achieve exemplary goals, consistent with the history, culture, and goals of the societal context (p.12).

The adaptation of the proposed definition used by Hawley and Jacobs (in press) therefore places the term workforce development into an applicable context for the educational research of community college partnerships with industry for economic development. Workforce development seeks to bridge individual, organizational, and societal interests, in ways that meaningfully benefit each other.

This understanding of workforce development clearly elevates the importance of partnerships across entities. Collaboration is necessary because workforce development programs explicitly provide for organizational as well as individual goals, which finds a foundation deeply rooted in Resource Dependency Theory.

Resource Dependency Theory

Resource Dependency Theory was developed by James Pfeffer and Gerald Salancik in the 1970s in response to environmental uncertainty faced by organizations. This theory of management was built on the notion that environments are the source of scarce resources and organizations are dependent on these finite resources for survival. A lack of control over
these resources thus act to create uncertainty for firms operating in that environment. Organizations must develop ways to exploit these resources, which are also being sought by other firms, in order to ensure their own survival (Kreiser & Marino, 2001, p.898).

More specifically, the theory describes how organizations are unavoidably linked and must contend with other organizations with whom they are interdependently related (Morphew, 1997). To this end, organizations must negotiate circumstances where they must cope with external demands. Resource Dependency Theory rests on primarily three assumptions: 1) Organizations are assumed to be comprised of internal and external alliances that emerge from social exchanges that are formed to influence and control behaviour; 2) The environment is assumed to contain scarce and valued resources essential to organizational survival. As such, the environment poses the problem of the organization at risk or facing uncertainty in resource acquisition; and, 3) Organizations are assumed to work toward two related objectives: 1) acquiring control over resources that minimize their dependence on other organizations; and, 2) gain control over resources that maximize the dependence of other organizations on themselves. Organizations that attain either of these objectives is thought to have affected the exchange between organizations, thereby affecting an organization’s power.

Although RDT was originally formulated to discuss relationships between organizations, the theory is also applicable to smaller group relationships among units within organizations. One of its theoretical constructs—external constraint--addresses
the notion that various external pressures and demands limit organizational choice and action. "Organizations will (and should) respond more to the demands of those organizations or groups in the environment that control critical resources" (Pfeffer, 1982, p. 193).

This study is based upon the proposition that if government and state funding given in support of community college education is diminishing, then the need to understand how community college partnerships with industry are working and what value of revenue source, if any, they provide becomes necessary. The key to organizational survival is the ability to acquire and maintain resources (Leslie & Slaughter, 1997; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1992).

As a public institution, the community college depends upon securing financial revenue from a variety of sources. From this context, resource dependency theory is relevant because it assumes that organizational stability depends upon the stability of resources. Resource dependency theory revolves around the notion of interdependence. This is the idea that (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, p. 40) "Virtually all organizational outcomes are based on interdependent causes or agents." For example, a community college is interdependent with a student because, in order for the community college to be successful, the student must enroll.

Similarly, a community college is interdependent with the state legislature or governing board because, in order to be successful, the community college must receive a budget that allows it to pursue goals. Similarly, in pursuit of the outcome of constructing a successful university, a state legislature or governing board is
interdependent with a community college because the community college, as an organizational unit, must pursue meaningful goals for the legislature or governing board to be deemed successful.

Research (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Tolbert, 1985; Sheppard, 1995) points out that some organizations, more than others, are quite vulnerable to demands from external organizations or claimants. Typically, those organizations that receive a) critical resources; or b) a large percentage of their resources from external claimants, are more vulnerable to their demands. The research showed that because public institutions receive a greater magnitude of their resources from public sources, administrative structures dealing with public fundraising had become institutionalized. That is, because of the magnitude and tradition of public funding within public institution, the organizational structures dealing with this type of fundraising had become normative and existed in the same form at many different public institutions. Importantly, the converse was also shown to be true at private institutions (Morphew, 1997).

When applied to institutions of higher education, resource dependence theory would predict that organizational behavior – in terms of adopting new structures, practices, and procedures – would be influenced by internal and external representatives that could provide critical resources to the academic institution. Building upon Tolbert’s (1985) research, the application of resource dependence theory to the behavior of public institutions would produce hypothesis-predicting behavior caused by demands from the public. One type of public demand would be
operationalized in student and community demand for new degree programs. That is, we would expect that public institutions of higher education would be especially susceptible to calls for new degree programs that would serve the public.

While Tolbert’s (1985) study found significant differentiation between the sources of administrative structure in private versus public institutions, a study by Kraatz & Zajac (1993) showed that resource dependency theories were useful in predicting the organizational behavior of private liberal arts colleges. The study conducted by Kraatz and Zajac (1992) showed how organizational change was predicted by resource availability and unaffected by the variables emphasized by instructional theorists.

No studies, to date, have applied Resource Dependency Theory to community colleges or their growing relationships with business and industry.

Current Research on Workforce Development and Partnerships in Community Colleges

Community colleges increasingly realize that their competitive position and future viability are inseparably linked to the region in which they operate (Matkin, 1990). Business and industry consistently seek ways to maintain a ready workforce (Katsinas & Lacey, 1990). State policymakers search for modes and different ways to develop human capital within their state in order to improve economic development (Farrell & Seifert, 2006). The economic strength and development of the region impacts higher education in that region, and the collective strength and participation
of the region's educational institutions acting together, and not separately – produce a powerful and positive force for growth of the region (Watson & Jordan, 1999).

The current research on community college partnerships with business and industry focuses on workforce development efforts for economic viability and sustainability. Traditional community college academic programs prepare students for four-year colleges or universities and granting degree completion. Community college partnerships with business and industry support workforce development training needs immediate employment and employment continuation (Maxwell, 1990). These partnerships has a two-fold purpose for workforce development; 1) trainer workers to increase their skill level at a current position, and 2) train career-changing workers during economic downturns that support re-employment of dislocated workers. Community college economic development is also known as contract education (Katsinas & Lacey, 1990).

Community college partnerships for workforce development provide benefits to students with career pathways. A study by the National Congress for Community Economic Development indicates 30 percent of community development corporations now offer employment and training programs, and almost half of them offer an education or and training program. (Local Initiatives Support Corporation, 2002). Partnerships between community colleges and with CBO's allow the college and business partner to draw upon and contribute significant strengths and resources toward developing pathways to employment and career progression (Gruber, 2004). A few examples of significant strengths include internships that provide an
introduction into the culture and inner workings of potential employers, professional mentoring experiences, and simulation training that allow students on-hands opportunities to use their skills in a "real" working environment.

There is not a current designated funding stream for CBO's that operate autonomously of the community college sector (Gruber, 2004). CBO's that partner with community colleges create numerous benefits for students, college, and business partner; all of which strengthens economic development. In their stand alone modes, CBO's provide students an array of social support, short and long term training education, and job placement. These partnerships provide a revenue stream for the college, and a strengthened and more highly skilled workforce for business partners. There is no one model process to follow in developing partnerships between community colleges and business or industry partners (Spangler, 2002). Little has been written about collaborations in higher education; discussion on this topic centers on "show and tell" descriptive pieces, interdisciplinary collaborations across academics (Amey, Brown, & Sandmann, 2002). Piegonski (2002) provides a bibliography on how these partnerships began and prospered. His report includes articles, reports and books that chronicle current partnerships, outlines state recommendations, and provides how one state measured economic development programs.

Summary

American community colleges are caught between the anvil of increasing demands and the hammer of diminishing resources. Among the strategies used by
community colleges to meet the demands and pressures of a global economy, reduced funding at all levels, is the popular expectation to develop closer ties with private business through collaborative activities is expected (NAB, 2001, p. 3). Community colleges are the very capable and very ready to answer the call for economic and workforce development, the challenges of achieving a definitive understanding of workforce development posses new concerns for post secondary institutions.

Industry partnerships with community colleges are viable solutions for challenges of a global economy, but greater are the benefits of filling the gap of economic disparity which limits access to education for employability and the sustaining or improving of quality of life for all peoples.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The basis for this research initiative was to examine community college partnerships with industry using a qualitative case study approach. The intent of the research was to aid decision-makers through understanding how partnerships were developed and what makes them work. In order to achieve effective data, the researcher had to: 1) assert to the participants that candid and honest answers are more helpful than adulations; and 2) refrain from providing indications of positive acceptance to feedback so that respondents would not be swayed to provide answers that would be perceived as being positive in the eyes of the interviewer (Alreck & Settle, 1995).

This chapter a) discusses the validity of studying the effectiveness of partnerships; b) proposes a detailed method for collecting data, and for reducing and analyzing critical processes or issues; c) discusses the techniques used to verify data collected; and d) shares a method of reporting findings so these data can be used to inform effective processes within other college and corporate partnerships.

Research Design Rationale

Qualitative research endeavors to answer questions related to the creation and meaning of social experiences and is less structured or restricted than quantitative research (Benoliel, 1984). Qualitative research methods were developed in the social
sciences to enable researchers to study social and cultural phenomena (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994; Yin, 2003). Social scientists, in particular, have made wide use of qualitative research methods to examine contemporary real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods (Patton, 2002).

The motivation for doing qualitative research comes from the observation that, if there is one thing which distinguishes humans from the natural world, it is our ability to talk! The researcher who uses a qualitative approach seeks to capture what people have to say in their own words. Qualitative data describe the experiences of people in depth and detail. The data are open-ended in order to find out what people’s lives, experiences, and interactions mean to them in their own terms and in their natural settings (Patton, 1982, p. 6).

Qualitative methodologies are used to allow inquiry into the “how” and “what” of a topic, and provide a mechanism for exploration into an uncharted question on a detailed level (Creswell, 1998). Qualitative methods are especially apt for a researcher seeking an understanding of how different entities collaborate (Yin, 1993). Patton (2002), describes the qualitative-naturalistic approach as one which studies real world situations as they unfold naturally. The qualitative-naturalistic research process is valid in that it is non-manipulative, unobtrusive, and open to results as the data emerge (Newton & Rudestam, 2001; Patton, 1990).

Guba (1978) defined naturalistic inquiry as a discovery-oriented approach that minimizes manipulation and places no prior constraints on what the outcomes of the research will be. The primary emphasis of this study was to describe why in principle
and how in practice community colleges form partnerships with corporation. This study was examined through the lens of Resource Dependency Theory.

Miles and Huberman (1994) asserted that qualitative research preserves the chronological flow of information, provides greater explanation of the data, and is more likely to lead to unanticipated findings and abstract assimilation than quantitative research. Their assertion indicate that this helps researchers go beyond initial preconceptions and frameworks to an understanding of why the instance happened as it did, and what might become important to look at more extensively in future research. Qualitative researchers recognize that “there is no single interpretive truth...there are multiple interpretive communities, each having its own criteria for evaluating and interpretation” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 15). Qualitative researchers endeavor to achieve what Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In other words, qualitative research seeks depth rather than breadth.

Case Study Research Method

Merriam (1988) suggested that case studies have become a mainstay of educational research and evaluation since case study methodology a) ensures collection of significant amounts of data; b) considers various factors and processes that affect the data, and; c) allows the researcher to consider the results in a holistic method.

The case study methodology aims to capture individual differences or unique variations from one program setting or experience to another. Specifically, the
qualitative case study “seeks to describe a unit in depth and detail, in context and holistically” (Patton, 1990, p. 54). The more a program study strives to find common outcomes or causes for those outcomes, the greater the appropriateness of qualitative measures of performance (Yin, 1989, p. 26).

Yin (1984) defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. Creswell (2003) asserts that in a case study, the researcher explores in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process of one or more individuals.

Case studies are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time. In order to gain more clarity about the types of questions that case studies use, three case studies were reviewed. The cases researched in this study consisted of three Midwest community colleges representing rural, suburban, and urban communities, and included a business or industry partner that was serviced by the community college in its region. Personal interviews, personal observations, and collection and analysis of artifacts, were all used in answering questions regarding the studies reviewed.

Yin (1993) and Tellis (1997) assert that a case study is an exploration that requires the investigator to present a descriptive theory, which includes a viable theoretical orientation before pronouncing research questions. The research questions
driving this investigation required holistic insight, which characterizes and engulfs the authentic environment in which the participants and the case exist. Case studies are appropriate when there is "how" questions that cannot be researched under experimentation, proof, or survey research (Yin, 2003).

Data Collection

Three data collection methods were used in the case analysis: 1) email request forms, 2) site-based interviews, and 3) document analysis. Data was collected from two groups; a key informant within each community college, and a key informant at the partnering corporation. Community college workforce development areas have not globally defined the title or role of the key administrator or decision-maker. These individuals were responsible for workforce development within their respective organizations. The rural community college identified its decision-maker by the title of Vice President of Continuing Education and Training Services. The suburban community college is referred to by dual titles of Director of Economic and Workforce Development and Field Agent because of her multi-faceted connections to the manufacturing industry and the certifications through several national organizations that she was aligned with. The urban community college identified its decision-maker by the title of Director of Business and Community Institute.

The research proposal indicated that business partners would be randomly selected by the community college. The actual process of selecting each business partner was executed through a personal invitation from their local college to
participate in the study. The individuals who consented to participate did so based on availability and willingness.

The organizational structure of each business partner differed in title and function. The industry partner to the rural community college was identified by the title of Director of Business/IT Solutions. The industry partner to the suburban community college was identified by the title of Human Resources Manager. Finally, the business partner for the urban community college was identified by the title of President of the local office of the UAW.

The participant’s true identities were not revealed in order to ensure confidentiality. All participants were given a pseudonym in the form of an acronym. The names of participants and colleges were replaced with acronym designations that reflect the type of community college or business partner they were, and the order in which they were interviewed. For example, RCC was the first college visited, and the partnering industry is referred to as RBP for Rural Business Partner. Table 1 was developed to assist readers in keeping pace with the conversations that came out from the interviews.
Table 1. Pseudonym Assignment and Title Identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Pseudonym of College or Business</th>
<th>Title of Interviewee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RCC</td>
<td>Rural Community College</td>
<td>Vice President of Continuing Education and Training Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBP</td>
<td>Rural Business Partner</td>
<td>Director of Business/IT Solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCC</td>
<td>Suburban Community College</td>
<td>Director of Economic and Workforce Development and Field Agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBP</td>
<td>Suburban Business Partner</td>
<td>Human Resources Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCC</td>
<td>Urban Community College</td>
<td>Director of Business and Community Institute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UBP</td>
<td>Urban Business Partner</td>
<td>President, Local UAW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Email was selected as a delivery system based on research (Elliott, Fricker, & Schonlau, 2002), which indicate for questionnaires email surveys are becoming increasingly popular because they are believed to be faster, better, cheaper, and easier to conduct than surveys using more-traditional telephone or mail methods. Elliott, Fricker, and Schonlau (2002) contend that electronic mail has become a widespread form of communication for businesses both internally and externally, providing ease of communication, enhanced work flow, the transfer of information and ideas, and a mechanism for easy file transfer.

After receiving an emailed receipt confirming participation, a request to review and/or access pertinent documents (Appendix D) that were developed to
establish partnerships and used to guide expectations toward desired outcomes was forwarded via electronic mail. Community colleges were given a list of examples of appropriate documents that included program enrollment, faculty composition, labor force and market research materials indicating development needs. Examples given to business and industry as appropriate document types were partnership contracts, human resource strategy and recruitment needs, line of business turnover statistics, current hiring policies and practices, and plans for workforce development. Prior to arriving at each community college and industry site for in-person interviews, an appointment reminder noting the day, date, time, and location via email delivery (Appendix E).

Instrumentation

Two separate sets of interview questions were developed for each group, appropriately formatted according to the individual's field of expertise and degree of experience in the partnership setting (Appendix A). Questions were semi-structured as well as open-ended, and related to their partnership experiences, expected outcomes, and impacts to economic development in their specific geography.

This study was conducted during the fall of 2006. Letters of invitation (Appendix B) were forwarded via email to the informants of the rural, suburban, and urban community colleges. Letters of invitation (Appendix C) were forwarded via email to the informants of the partnering business or industry. Interview times and locations were scheduled at the discretion of the participants. Each interview lasted approximately two hours. Interviews with industry partners were conducted at their
operating facilities, with one exception. The interview with UBP was conducted over conference call by the researcher from a conference room at the community college. The venue change was due to the work demands of the automotive industry and the limited travel time available for the participant to move between locations before the next scheduled meeting. Interviews with SCC and UCC were conducted on their campuses.

The participants of these two previously mentioned institutions included a second representative from their college later in the interviews. These new invitees were included to added value to the conversations relative to dynamics of the partnerships they personally experienced from their interactions with the business partners. The interview with RCC was conducted in RBP’s conference room. Ultimately the goal of these interviews was to, as Yin (2003) asserts, conduct research using a logical plan of getting from here to there, where “here” may be defined as an initial set of questions to be answered, and “there” is some set of conclusions (answers) about the questions.

The interview guide was used in each session to ensure the research questions were adequately covered while allowing for free-flowing conversation within a topic area. The open-ended questions related to participants’ partnership experiences, expected outcomes, and impacts to the economic development in the geography serviced by the community college. Sub questions where asked in order to clarify the participants’ experiences. Community college participants responded to an interview guide consisting of five open-ended questions (Appendix A). The interview for
industry partners also consisted of five open-ended questions (Appendix B); however the questions were structured slightly different to be. Six individuals in total were interviewed. These individuals were key players as they are the decision makers of workforce development training needs for their respective institutions.

Site visits for both, the community college, and business partner in the same geographies were achieved in a one day. Before leaving each site the next day, confirmation phone calls were made to participants to ensure that they were able to complete their thoughts regarding the research topic. Permission to tape the interviews was obtained from participants prior to agreeing to take part in the study.

Document Review

A document analysis of the research material included 1) mission statements, 2) catalogues, 3) project management documents used to progress the partnership, 4) printed matter directly related to the partnership activity, 5) historical documents, and 6) artifacts linked to the collaboration. This type of data collection was especially recommended by Berg (1995) because information acquired by this method has been seen as very valuable in creating a profound understanding of the theory and practice of the partnership paradigm. It offers important data that supplements interviews and observations.

RCC provided partnership-specific documents that contained letters of agreement with the business partner, defining service agreements, pricing schedules, terms and conditions for training needs. RCC also supplied a historical document that was referred to as a business partnership report. This data collecting tool was a
combination of a spreadsheet and record archive of dates and transactions that took place between the college and all of their business partners. RCC used the document to track the service relationships with each individual business partner, as well as provide an at-a-glance look at the frequency of involvement they have between the institution and business partners.

SCC provided a standard sample copy of the contract they used to establish training agreements with the business partner. Other documents that RCC and SCC provided were marketing materials used to inform the public of academic programs and service offerings. UCC did not provide any documents that were used to develop and maintain partnerships with business and industry. RBP, SBP, and UCC did not provide documents that were used to develop or maintain partnerships with community colleges.

While formal documentation used to establish and maintain these partnerships were limited, a plethora of information relating to the academic programs offered through the community college to students and the business community was available at the internet websites for these institutions. Partnerships-specific information was difficult to obtain, and not readily available since these partnerships existed and operated on the relationships that existed between the decision makers of these organizations.

Data Management and Analysis

The data collected for this study was divided into classifications (Bogdan & Bilken, 1998): a) field notes of both the descriptive and reflective nature; b) tapes and

45
transcripts from interviews in the field; and, c) official documents from the community colleges and industries. A simple coding process was incorporated that was used to control and sort most of the key data (e.g., transcriptions of taped interviews, field notes, etc.).

Interview notes and audio taped conversations collected were inventoried for quick and immediate access, and to also ensure that information provided by each participant was cohesive with their response and experiences. Participant interviews were catalogued for ensure proper clarity of which participant provided information, as well as to see at-a-glance themes that emerged relative to community college and industry partnerships.

Interview Protocols

All research in this study was conducted according to the guidelines established by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board, and an IRB Consent Form was provided to and signed by each interviewee (Appendix F). Each interview began with a brief introduction that outlined both the purpose and the benefits of this study. The participants were offered the opportunity to ask for any clarification and that the issues of confidentiality will be carefully explained; none of the participants requested additional information. The protocols for the interviews of key stakeholders in this partnership included a number of common questions (Appendix A).
Data Presentation and Reliability

A tape recorder was used during all interviews, and was later reviewed for emerging themes. Themes were then coded and compared to notes taken in the field, and then placed in the corresponding case format (e.g., Rural Community College Partnership). As Lincoln and Guba argue (1985), “Data analysis involves taking constructions gathered from the site and reconstructing them into meaningful wholes” (p.333).

Member checking is a process through which respondents verify the data they provided and the proper interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each participant received, via email, a copy of their interview transcripts for review, clarification, and suggestions. Suggested changes were made and transcripts were re-sent for final verification. All data was verified using this process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicated that member checking is comprehensive in that it is wide and broad to test for accuracy of interpretation, and provides credibility to the results.

Summary

Qualitative research endeavors to answer questions related to the creation and meaning of social experiences and is less structured or restricted than quantitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The basis of this study was a qualitative and comparative study of the industry partnerships that existed between three community colleges in rural, urban, and suburban communities. The interview guides consisted of two parts.
The first part of the interview was designed to capture preliminary data using an email request for document review. The document review was limited because of the risk to corporations releasing proprietary information that contain company-specific data. The second part of the interview guide contained five primary questions which focused on the partnership needs for both organizations and assessments of partnership value. There were several sub questions posed in the interview. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants from each of the above listed groups, including one pre-selected business or industry serviced by the community college in their respective region. Data was collected through in-person interviews, field observations, and a review of documents provided by the participants.

The data collected from personal interviews and field observations was plenteous. However, there was limited data was derived from the document review process primarily because formal documents that were used to develop and maintain these partnerships were not a high priority for either of the organizations, and not made available for this study. Trustworthiness and credibility was established through member checking to ensure accurate and authentic interpretation of the respondents.
CHAPTER IV

CASE STUDY RESULTS

This chapter addresses the questions how community college partnerships with business and industry are working, and how if at all, these partnerships impact economic development. The purpose of this study was to describe, analyze, and interpret, the expectations and outcomes of industry partnerships with community colleges to determine their value, emerging themes that have contributed to their success or demise, and whether the goals initially set forth in establishing these partnerships was achieved.

This was a multiple site case study. The major data gathering technique was in-depth interviews; six interviews in total. Three interviews were conducted with community college representatives of rural, suburban, and urban communities. Each of the three community colleges invited a pre-selected business partner to participate in the study.

The results of each of the three cases are presented in this section. First, the institutions and their business partners are described. Results of the interviews with each community college and its business partner are presented, followed by an analysis of themes that emerged from the participant interviews.
Case Results

The results of each of the three cases are presented in this section. A description of the community, the college, and the partnering industry is provided in order to develop a context for each case. The results of the interviews with the community college workforce development participants are presented next, followed by the interview with the partnering business. Then an analysis of the themes that emerged from the interviews is given. Each case concludes with a summary.

Rural Community College Partnership Case

Rural Community

Agriculture has been and continues to be the primary source of economy, however, the metropolitan area within this community has developed into a global trade center and enjoys benefits from a highly diversified manufacturing community. The population in the rural community is 123,119, which had a racial composition of 1.7% Asian, 3.6% African American, 1.6% Hispanic, and 90% White. The median household income was $43,704. The average number of people per household was 2.96. Education statistics for the area indicated that over 90% graduated high school, while 28.4% earned bachelor degrees. The largest employing category was Personal Health and Business Services, which employed approximately 35,900.
Rural Community College

The rural community college serves approximately 15,000 credit students in more than 100 career and college-transfer programs in a seven-county area. RCC was established in 1966 and moved to its present location in 1968. RCC is the third largest institution of higher education in its state. The campus resides on 620 acres of countryside, and is located near the intersection of two major thorough fares on the southern edge of the city. In addition, the college has 11 center locations.

The campus boasts twenty-six modern buildings that house classrooms, laboratories, and lecture halls. Credit students range in age from 14 to 79. The gender composition of the student population consists of 54 percent female and 46% male. There are 577 international students, which represent 94 different countries. Students come from 34 states and 96 of 99 of the state’s counties. 4,500 students enrolled in adult literacy, English language acquisition, GED preparation, adult high school, and other programs. Partnerships included organizations from four main categories: business, community services, government programs, and educational institutions.

Rural Business Partner

The Midwest rural city has grown to be RBP’s largest U.S. location and home to six divisions and major business units. RBP is among the leading employers of the state. RBP has more than 2,700 employees in the region to support their insurance and investment operations. RBP staff composition includes accountants, computer and information technology specialists, underwriters, actuaries, securities analysts,
attorneys, customer service specialists, and experts in real estate, marketing and finance.

Many RBP employees benefit from the convenience of an on-site childcare center, two indoor fitness facilities, full-service cafeterias, and a scenic walking path on the corporate campus. Exercise classes, personal training and sports leagues are also available.

Strategic Goals for Partnership

RCC

RCC assimilated strategic goals with their college’s mission statement. The Vice President believes that community colleges must be clear and fluent on their mission in order to address the ever-changing needs of students, community, and employers, as well as state requirements. She believes that strategies and goals within the organization are derived from its mission statement and identifies the core purpose of the community college. “Our colleges’ strategic goal is to live out the institution’s mission because it is robust and real.” The Vice President affirmed that the institution’s mission is significant as it evokes actions in support of business needs. She believes that RCC’s mission statement is provocative in that it compels the leadership to ask questions of their purpose relative to the service they provide to employers. “The mission provokes us to seek answers to - What are the business partner’s needs? How does the community college drive training programs that are profitable for the business?”
The Vice President conceives that the mission and governance of the community college played a critical role in establishing partnerships with industry. She believes that the mission statement was a clear translation of the organization's vision, which included business and industry in their plan of supporting the community's needs. Similarly, she believes that the governance of the college was also critical to partnerships. Her perception was that the governance, because of its highly centralized form, enhanced corporate accountability; it stimulated trust among the leaders empowering each one to achieve the expectations of the partnerships based on need. The dynamics of this relationship with business partners was perceived to have resulted in the organizational wealth of the college and the business partner. "Our College has had a fabulous mission, and I think we have had pretty visionary leaders in its governance structure." The Vice President explained that RCC operates on the opinion that business and industry are considered part of the community. She also believes that the governance structure has always focused on the college's role as central to identifying community needs. They did not just look at it from the standpoint of citizens of the community and students, but also from the employer perspective as well.

The Vice President of RCC indicated that while the notion of strategic goal planning is important for setting targets and measuring outcomes, they sometimes limit organizations in being able to take an entrepreneurial approach to achieving goals based on the demands of the business partner. She believed that the entrepreneurial spirit allowed RCC to develop relationships with diverse industries
that needed to achieve goals in different ways. She indicated that the college’s President did not focus on strategic planning, but rather considered it as a hindrance to achieving successful relationships with business and industry. The former president was with RCC for 25 years, and president for 19 of those years. During his tenure, he did not believe in strategic planning. The former president developed a culture within RCC that operated on the idea that divisions within the college should have goals, but they should not be locked into a laborious planning process that created a document to sit on a shelf, or that would be tight and restrictive.

The Vice President perceived that the former leader wanted the college to remain flexible enough to be able to accept ideas from the faculty and staff in order to value everyone’s opinions and ideas. She explained, “He absolutely believed in flexibility. His focus was to create and model, by his own behavior, an open environment by which anybody could bring an idea or opportunity to the table and we would consider it.” The Vice President believed that when you start to create a culture of that nature, and your employees can take risks, which is what really creates the hallmark of a college being considered an innovator in workforce training and partnership developments.

RBP

The Director of Business described the managerial process of his organization as decentralized for the purposes of organic growth opportunities and divestitures in getting rid of pieces of the organization that are deemed no longer profitable. He explained that the decentralized approach to organizational management provides a
framework of guiding principles, which empowers each business or country unit to identify and focus on issues relevant to their locale. "This arrangement works successfully for us around the world, and has resulted in a wide range of national and local projects – some of them award winning – that bring real environmental and social benefits." RBP is an international company that deals with employees from diverse cultures, organizations, and vendors with various philosophies. The Director believed that the idea of strategic goals was restrictive. He surmised that a standardized structure for an entire organization would carry a great burden on the leaders since they deal with different people, cultures, and needs.

RBP used guiding principles synonymously with strategic goals and mission statement. "Yes, we have the normal high-level guiding principles (e.g., maintain 10% growth, focus on profitability, etc.); but we are not resting our hat on these." The Director felt that opportunities for growth and profitability do not always come through strategic planning, but sometimes happen out of the norm. He cited the experience his company participated in with an international student exchange that was not initially on the company’s radar. The opportunity to provide an enriched educational experience for local students while making international business and educational allies was too good to pass on. The exchange resulted in developing a sister school overseas and an international internships for college graduates. Strategic goals can be important, but too limiting for growth. "Organizations can paralyze themselves with the ‘ready, aim, aim, aim...’with too many strategies or static performance requirements that often times are never attained.”
Partnership Objectives

RCC

The partnership between RCC and RBP was stimulated by the State through funding initiatives for business development. The Vice President said, "In 1982 the economy was not good in our state. We did not have the influx of new business or industry, but companies were closing or moving; both actions inhibited jobs and economic growth." The State made monies available to organizations as incentive for new jobs. Another program was developed by the State early in the 1990s to provide funds for incumbent workers. This enticement created a win-win for business owners because they received financial assistance to upgrade worker skills. The Vice President indicated, "The State’s provision of funds immediately put us at the table with business and industry." These funds were given under the auspices of labor and economic development to help enable a ready workforce. Through this initiative, the state legislation designated community colleges as administrators of the financial program.

As a result, business and industry looked to the community college as a partner who learned different ways to apply these funds for the development of industry-specific training for their workers. "The wow factor was big!" RCC also sold bonds on the company’s behalf to establish the training funds, and the funds can only be used for training purposes. This model was developed specifically by the state in which RCC serves. With great pride, the Vice President explained that the activities that have emerged from this model are touted all over the United States.
The notoriety of the program has encouraged what she referred to as “copycats being made.” One of the Great Plains states has a program that mirrors RCC’s, and a U.S. territorial state is looking at this model. National delegations have come to the Midwest state to look at this program, and the senior management team of RCC frequently talks with other states seeking advice on how to put a program like this together.

Initially, the rural business partner had a workforce whose basic skills competencies rated at elementary levels. The Vice President said, “RBP needed for us to come assess the basic skills competencies of their employees, and build a solution to upgrade these competencies to higher levels.” Because of RCC’s numerous partnerships in creating workforce solutions they were poised to ask of themselves two questions consistently: “Do we understand who our clients/customers are?” and, “Do we understand who our best clients are?”

In order to answer these questions and meet objectives of retaining current partnerships, RCC had incorporated measurement processes that provide the ability to measure their volume of business from training contracts in order to ascertain their value to industry and project future business. By posing this line of inquiry, RCC was able to sell new training to the same organization which became a repeat customer.

One of our measurements on the contract-to-training team side is to measure the percentage of repeat business from our best clients. We do call on new businesses in town, but our relationship is strong with our current clients, and year after year after year they are buying
training from us. We do this by making sure we have strong relationships and conducting a needs assessment, and delivering quality training. If they do not like the product we are providing, then they won't come back.

**RBP**

The rural business partner had experienced basic skills gaps in its workforce. Basic skills included reading, writing, and math. Deficiency in these areas resulted in comprehension issues among employees and prevented them from effective problem solving.

The Director stated, “We expected RCC to develop consortiums and bring alliances together to understand these phenomena and develop assessments and solutions that would strengthen the workforce.” He said that they wanted RCC to help raise the literacy levels among their workforce. “It was as simple as that.”

**Formal Documents**

**RCC**

The Vice President chuckled when asked whether formalized documents were developed for the partnership. She indicated that the partnership with RBP did not begin on formality. Eventually, after they had sold many training opportunities to RBP, there were some formal documents that were developed to help track transactions. She said, “Documents do exist, and I know some of the critical points that are in them relative to who owns land, pricing, and things like that. But the
content of documents never comes up until we reach a pinnacle point of a sale or acquisition of a facility or land."

Legal and/or formalized documents are not the glue that held the relationship between RCC and RBP together. The Vice President indicated that her efforts had been focused on cultivating the relationships more than checking on the dynamics of formal entities. One vital way success is measured with partnerships is that repeat business with the same customers continues to be gained. The Vice President said that the focus is not on legal documents involved in the partnership at RCC, nor had she taken the time to really read them. She did state, however, that one of the issues relative to housing a business center or data center on a college campus does require decisions and documentation on who will own the land, is the land being sold or given, and who will own the building. In essence, property matters.

In RCC’s case, the community college owns the land, the business partner owns the building, but after 60 years the business partner forfeits the building to the college, making the college full owner of everything. The Vice President believed that cultivating and stimulating relationships with business and industry is an effective way to build partnerships. She believed that building relationships through partnerships added value and meaning for the institutions and the business. "We believe that building relationships within and outside of the community college develops our focus and affects the process of building meaningful educational opportunities for business, community, students, and even our economy."
Relationships were held in high esteem. "We value each other as people." The relationship between RCC and RBP was initially conceived through a friendship.

The partnership with RBP came about through the former community college president's wife who worked as a travel coordinator for the business partner. Her role in that organization was to coordinate and attend trips for the top performing sales people at RBP. The community college president accompanied his wife on a cruise that also happened to be with the president of RBP. A general conversation was struck up relative to needing a housing unit for a business function of the company; the offer was made by the college to house the function on its campus.

In general, through conversations between the two about business needs, a relationship (personal and professional) developed. 19 years later, the relationship continues stronger than ever, and is cultivated in the same non-formal manner. The Vice President believes when getting to know people on that type of level, it's not formal and it's not stiff; it's simply valuing each other as people. There were no formal contracts or documents used to develop the partnership, merely conversations about what the community college could do to help with training, development, workforce readiness, and the like.

In RCC's history there had only been three presidents since its beginnings. When the time came to fill the presidency at the college, the residing President did not come from a national search or an internal candidate selection. The same culture, however, of building partnerships through relationships continued under the residing President. The Vice President believes that this same culture was maintained because
the President was hand selected by the college’s outgoing leader. “The history of RCC has been to select a K-12 Superintendent into the leadership position of the college, and he was selected accordingly. The previous President and the Board decided that the outgoing President would pick his successor.” The new president was mentored for one year by the outgoing President prior to his retirement.

The current President of RCC encourage the practice of building relationships even among his staff, and does so through his own behavior. His commitment to relationship building include demonstrating a mutual respect for people, openness with dialogue, and understanding a person’s basic need of what he could provide. The Vice President believes that their relationship with RBP was strong, and required full commitment. Sharing common interests with the business partner also helped to enrich the relationship. She said, “We spend a lot of time cultivating relationships with our business partner.

Examples of the extracurricular activities shared between the decision makers in the partnership between RCC and RBP are golf outings, anniversary celebrations, community events, and the like. She explained, “This is how business is done.” The Vice President laughed and openly admitted that she is not a golfer. In fact, she explained that the business partners have seen her at her worst on the golf course. She perceives that camaraderie was valuable among the partnerships because the exchange of other interests between the leaders provided more insight to their characters. “Stimulating relationships with business partners is critical, especially in a small community. We make concerted efforts to meet annually, and I even bump into
these people at the grocery store, a golf outing, a community event.” For the rural community college, partnerships are long-standing, alleviating the need to re-establish relationships with companies during a “changing of the guard” season since turnover at the senior level are rare.

**RBP**

The Director laughed whimsically as he explained how the partnership with RCC came together. He replied, “You know, the partnership between RCC and RBP began on a cruise ship 19 years ago…” The story continued in the same manner and with emphasis on the same words as was told to me by RCC. It appears that the story has become a cultural legend within both organizations. The Director expressed through the tone of his voice and facial gestures gratification in their partnership with RCC as he stated, “We are spoiled in our relationship with RCC”.

By his account, the Director believes the partnership between RCC and RBP was strong and possessed merit for both of the organizations, for students, and the community. His perception is that if there was a “changing of the guard” within RCC and RBP, both organizations would function as they did at the time of this research; in partnership with each other. “If there is a total replacement of the “guard,” the relationship is beyond people…it’s institutionalized, it don’t matter who is in the leadership chairs now. When it comes to close personal relationships, they know who to come to.”
Partnership Benefits

RCC

From the community college’s perspective, partnerships with industry were working great because the revenue stream it creates. The Vice President understands that the partnership could not be taken for granted. Community colleges compete with other firms and organizations for the same pocket share of available funding. She believes that RCC has to stay in touch with the needs of its partners and be able to deliver fast, intentionally, and with high quality. “Our industry partners know that they have other options than our community college, so credibility on our part is premium.”

RCC receives revenue and property, which they used to build new facilities capable of housing new or expanded programs. “We believe we are getting more out of the partnerships with industry than what we had ever expected.” The college was able to assess an administrative fee to oversee this program as it provided workforce development services to industry partners.” The administrative fee, established by the State Department of Economic Development, had been at 15% for the last five years. At the time at the time of this study, the Department set the rate at 20%. The college chose to not use the administrative fee to pay salaries and benefits, but rather it increased or enhanced program offerings and facilities. This choice was made for two reasons: 1) the college had established the expectation that the non-credit division would be self sustaining financially, so these funds would be put to better use by increasing future earning potential, and 2) the college chose to model itself after its
partners and behave in the same way as its clients – like a business. The community college's ability to model these business-like characteristics was perceived as essential to maintaining alliances, and keeping the competitive edge of selling new training contracts and stay in business. The Vice President said;

We compete with the private sector, and we have to earn our money.
Secondly, we can use that money for economic development purposes.
The way in which you invest in a corporate training center is different than the way you invest in for the credit side of the college. Room temperature, lighting, coffee, how comfortable the seats, as well as training content are what's important, and will return students.

According to her assessment, what works well in this partnership were common cultures and language between RCC and RBP. "A primary benefit to us and our partner is that we speak the language of business and industry." Business partners did not have to stop or slow down and translate their business needs from industry to academia. Common language and dialogue is a benefit that enriches the partnerships, and because of quick-to-market demands of industry, time does not allow for interpretation between discipline vernaculars. The Vice President said, "Businesses do not have to slow down their process to explain meanings or needs to us; we get it!"

The driver of the partnership between RCC and RBP rests in the established relationship of the leaders of both organizations. While it took the college President to stay involved and stimulate reciprocity between the two, the leaders of the non-credit side of the institution kept the relationships active; they are driving new
relationships and new contracts with existing partners. They were the ones who had the contacts and understand the business needs.

**RBP**

The Director expressed satisfaction in the partnership. He believes that the relationship was going well, and has been over a two decade period. One of the greatest benefits RBP receives from this partnership was the more simplified process of career education. RBP experienced the surge of un-prepared and un-skilled workers that ended up in the company’s employ. RCC helps to identify critical issues of the employability of high school graduates by developing tests to assess basic skills levels.

Employees with high school diplomas were deficient in basic reading, writing, and math skills. Hiring these individuals in entry level positions created a gap in the company’s ability to progress in customer contact areas where resolving problems for customers was required. The Director explained, “It was taking us more time to get the job done, and we needed to know why.”

The Vice President established a consortium with the local business community that included the Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development department, and regional business leaders to research how wide and embedded was the phenomenon of under-performing high school graduates. She identified basic skills and comprehension literacy as systemic barriers to the economic vitality of their region. RCC introduced the ACT (American College Testing), which is an innovative
workforce development program used to increase the effectiveness of their hiring and training processes, increase productivity, reduce costs, and improve corporate success.

ACT is nationally known for college entrance requirements, and has broadened its impact to include workplace measurement and resource services. ACT developed an assessment system referred to as WorkKeys, which measures job skill of potential employees RCC serves as a bridge to bring public education leaders, higher education leaders, and employers to the table, and work in a collaborative to assess the life cycle and challenges of K-12 students entering employment in their region.

On the employment side – WorkKeys aid RBP in the process of verifying basic skill assessments. It provides the business partner with another tool for applicant and employee assessment. The bridge that RCC provides also helps to improve the student transition from K-12 to college. The Director stated, “This is a ‘feel good’ benefit for students wanting to further their educational experience.” He further explained, “RCC does a great job in course alignment for student careers in that they serve as an arbitrator to make sure classes that are taken at RCC transfer very well to our state university.”

RBP experienced other training needs, specific to their industry. However, their expectation of RCC does not include industry specific training. If there were training needs central to the insurance business, RBP did it themselves. For example, they do not expect RCC to understand or train variable annuity products. “RCC was very responsive to our employment needs of basic competencies among our workers.”
Quick to market is an expectation, but there were times when RBP was able to forego speed if it had a greater benefit for the company and the community in the long run.

RBP’s United States data center is currently located on RCC’s campus. The arrangement evolved several years before when RBP owned a facility that was only needed as a contingency center in case of emergencies. RCC was in need of a corporate training center at that same time, so the facility was made available at no cost for RCC to renovate and use based on their need. Sharing work space was a win-win for both the business partner and the community college. RBP needed a business resumption center to conduct disaster recovery plans should the need arose. Whereas RCC needed more visible exposure, which the site provided since it was located central to the city. It was mutually beneficial for both organizations. The Director said, “We had a tenant there all of the time, and RCC needed to be a bit more core to the city. It was risk free for us.”

RCC eventually outgrew this space and decided to build a facility on their main campus to house the training program. At this same time, RBP was in need of an IT (Information Technology) center, so RCC reciprocated the generosity and offered RBP space in their campus location. RBP committed $1.6 million dollars toward the building on campus, and considered it a necessary investment for continual and future growth. The Director explained, “It was investment in the community, but it also was a partial offset to some of the costs that we would have been expected to pay for the accelerated career educational program.” He believes that any investment to RCC was an investment to RBP’s workforce development, and to the community.
These contributions were a commitment to economic development, and included the understanding that the future of their organization has a reliance on their investment to create and maintain a ready workforce. “Our span of client base is in a small eight county corridor...from an investment perspective, the community is going to have to carry us long past the time I’m clipping stock coupons.”

**Partnership Challenges**

**RCC**

The Vice President recognizes that consulting firms were competition for them. She explained that consulting firms also provided workforce solutions for business partners. In her assessment, the institution as a whole had more service options to develop a workforce for the business partner compared to consulting firms. The community college was already set up with courses in basic skills, specialized training programs, certification programs, technology training, and flexibility in schedule to meet service industry needs.

Even with its vast offerings, the community college did not always receive every training opportunity. The Vice President understands that RCC is not the business partner’s only supplier of workforce intervention solutions. She provided an example of losing training contracts to the competition. “Our business partner had a need for us to put together a program for their information technology people, but felt that another community college in our state could service them better.”

Information technology is supported by the credit side of the institution. RCC had put together many short-term programs on the non-credit side to meet their
business partner’s needs; however they were not very responsive to the business partner’s expectation on the credit side for this opportunity. According to the Vice President, the credit side functions differently than the non-credit side of the institution when it comes to understanding quick and quality delivery to the business partner. The credit side is more academic, whereas the non-credit side operates as a business.

**RBP**

The Director emphasized that one area RBP was focusing on was to create and maintain a ready workforce. One of the challenges inhibiting RBP’s ability to forecast staffing issues is that information relative to talent demographics in the region was not available. He did not understand what population of employees had come from RCC as a result of the partnership. Future growth patterns depended upon being able to find hundreds more people out there when needed to fill vacant and newly created positions. RBP provided a tuition reimbursement program that paid for books and fees. Yet data on how many students graduate who have benefited from this investment was not known to him. Because of the number of other partnerships RCC managed, RBP had to stand in line and take a number to be serviced by RCC.

**Changes in Partnership Dynamics and Lessons Learned**

**RCC**

The Vice President believes that hindsight provided better visibility. She noted that documentation in tracking decisions and outcomes could have provided a
frame for future partnerships with the community college. She explained that it would have been great for RCC to have good record keeping of how the relationship with RBP was built and grew so that they could have offered a model of what worked best. She explained:

I would have documented more and much better. I would have developed documents to track all of the great things about the partnership, because not every business partner we have has the same mindset as RBP. In fact, if you can find another industry partner better than RBP, I want to know about them, they just don’t make ’em like this one!

RBP

The Director believes that partnerships need to include everyone. He said, “There is nothing that I would change per se, but the lessons for future partnerships with community colleges, is the economic component, for your company and your community.” He strongly believes that many challenges businesses face to employ workers are due to the gaps existing in the educational process beginning with K-12 system. “If we continue to see the need for remedial classes, and have to pay to correct them when students reach college or even become employed, then we are working in a backwards motion that will have an endless fall.” The Director suggested a change in the paradigm that provided a change in the life cycle of employees, especially the ability to retain high school and college graduating youth for jobs and careers in the region.
Economic Development and Partnerships

**RCC**

The Vice President believes that the educational system and workforce development are the foundations of economic development. She stated, "It's a simple equation; you will not have good industry, unless you have good education. Good education results in a good workforce." Companies are driven to regions where they can assure employees that their children will have good educational opportunities from the cradle to college. Without partnerships - that is, community colleges and organizations working together to build solutions for ever-changing and challenging markets, economic development has no support. The Vice President is persuaded that the community college for the rural area is a strong and active participant in the economic development communities, as well as supporting organizations and regional committees that impact quality of life for residents and the business community.

**RBP**

The Director believes that workforce development is economic development; and this is realized through the improvement in the K-12 system and retaining the youth in the region for employment opportunities. He said that RCC and RBP just happened to be in a hot spot for economic development. Like other cities he acknowledged the isolated business closings in the region, firms getting bought out, and workforce size changes.

He explained that RCC was the fabric that held relationships together and bridged the link to K-12 education, the Chambers, and the community in order to
figure out how to retain the area youth for future growth. He stated, "If we don’t hold on to our youth for opportunity, in areas of good jobs, good education, and a good quality of life we will have a repeat of employing un-skilled workers that we previously experienced before the partnership with RCC."

The Director expressed plans to continue establishing more training and development contracts with RCC. He believes that since everyone needs to be at the discussion table about this issue there would then also need to be a diversity of service providers to aid business and industry with upgrading skills among the workforce in order to ensure economic development. The Director said, "It’s going to take everyone being involved because this is a huge issue that impacts us all. I would be concerned about our relationship with RCC becoming too diluted or not meaningful by wearing out their partnership with RCC with constant issues of workforce needs.

He indicated that part of economic development really allows for spreading the wealth so other organizations could get involved. He believes that there is more room at the table, and that there are even more tables where his organization can sit to be involved with economic development for their region. "We do need to probably make a greater presence in some of the state universities and business schools. Not at job fairs, but getting in with the instructors and Deans to discuss course and program development that enhances the employability of the students."

The insurance company had a regionally recognized intern program in which they employed 80 – 100 college junior and senior students through the summer, and
some local students through the year. In 2005, they hired 27 students into the company. RBP also had a higher level leadership development program which is a combination of MBA graduates. The program worked by taking external MBA graduates who were recruited and were partnered with internal candidates (internal candidates were not always MBA graduates), and were placed in a two year rotation for leadership.

The Director believes that RBP received a good blending of skills from the intern program. The composition of the intern group was a mixture of minorities and professional ranking people who have worked six to eight years and possessed vast work experience. External interns were inter-mingled with internal experienced people so that they could understand the culture. RBP targeted recruiting efforts from Notre Dame, Iowa, Purdue, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The Director explained that he wants to create the process called, “My Vision” for the life cycle of retaining our youth looks like;

As high school seniors they would go through one of our financial services academies, and then become an intern in the summer. After the internship, they would obtain their MBA, and came back through the LDP, and then they came back to work for us. Now that’s holding on to our youth!

Summary of Rural Community College Partnership

The rural community college in this study had a 19 year plus relationship with its business partner. The coming together of the partnership was enticed by state
funding that assigned community colleges as administrators for workforce development funding initiatives with area businesses. The Vice President of RCC believed that the institution’s mission statement explains that the college exists to improve the quality of life for the community, which includes business and industry among its citizenry. However, the partnership was developed and sustained through the investment in personal relationships between the organizations’ leaders.

Camaraderie between the leaders of both organizations was important as it helped to stimulate trust and respect among the decision makers. Each of the leaders spent time apart from business responsibilities to engage in activities like golf outings, which helped to cultivate and strengthen the relationship. From camaraderie developed trust, which took a higher priority than the use of formal documentation. Formal documents were brought into the partnership after the relationship was established, and were so much a secondary consideration that neither leader could locate or discuss them in detail. The documents included details that defined resource and property ownership, philanthropic gifts. However, these documents surfaced again, but only during liquidations or acquisitions of property.

From the Vice President’s perspective, the partnership worked well in the area of creating a new revenue source that helped to fill the gap created by federal and state reduced funding. The college was able to continuously improve academic program quality, particularly on the non-credit side of the institution that services business needs. Also, RCC gained new working space through philanthropic gifts from RBP that provided opportunities for new training sites and technology upgrades.
The Director believed that the partnership was very successful with RCC in that workforce development assessments had proven to be of great value to the company. RCC and RBP are dependent on each other because they share interventions relative to workforce development issues, including the sharing of workspace. The participants in the rural community college partnership case collectively believed that they inherited unresolved remedial needs of college students and employees from the K-12 public education structure. They believed that K-12 schools in the area promote students to higher levels of learning who have not successfully demonstrated basic reading, writing, and math. Because of this problem community colleges and businesses spent much of their time and resources developing interventions to improve student literacy while trying to educate and employ these same individuals. The Vice President of RCC, and the Director of RBP both believed that workforce development is fundamental to economic development; one does not exists without the other.

Suburban Community College Partnership Case

Suburban Community

The suburban community resides in a county with a population of 5,206,357 that was 100% urban and has no rural population. The county had 2,096,121 houses in a land area: 945.7 sq. mi. Specific to the suburban community in this research study, the population was 21,552 composed of 47.2% males and 53% females. The median resident age is 40 years. The estimated median household income is $64,200,
and the estimated median house/condo value was $204,800. The racial composition of the suburban community is Black (50.8%), White Non-Hispanic (43.6%), Hispanic (3.8%), Other race (1.9%), two or more races that are not specifically defined were (1.2%), and American Indian (0.5%).

The most common industries for males were construction, finance and insurance, public administration (5%), health care (5%), educational services (5%), Administrative and support and waste management services (4%), Professional, scientific, and technical services, religious, accommodation and food services. The suburban community placed a high value on a heritage of faith, an emphasis on family, a home for future.

**Suburban Community College**

SCC was founded in 1927. At that time, the College was an extension of an area high school in Illinois. The college served five high school districts in surrounding communities. In 1969 the institution was named a comprehensive community college, and it moved into its current main campus facilities in 1972.

More than 17,000 students, on average, are enrolled at SCC. The College offers a wide selection of career education and college transfer credit programs. Additionally, SCC offers non-credit customized training, short-term instruction for business, and dozens of special interest classes.

**Suburban Business Partner**

SBP is a family run furniture manufacturing business that began in 1948. SBP manufactured "to the trade" stylish, affordable, quality furniture for the home. The
company is located in an economically developed subsidized area of a south suburban city in a Midwest state. SBP has two showrooms that display their craftsmanship. One showroom is located on the West Coast; the second showroom is located in a southern state. SBP specializes in supplying retailers nationwide. They supplied 17 retail national chains. SBP has fewer than 100 employees that are comprised of approximately nine families. The majority of employees in the manufacturing plant are non-English speaking.

**Strategic Goals for Partnership**

**SCC**

The Director indicated that the college’s strategic goals are centered on the academic and training needs of students and the business community. She believes that these goals are indicative of the values prescribed by the community in which the college resided and serves; they are faith, family, and future. She said that the values of the community are grafted in the college’s mission and purpose to serve its students and the community through lifelong learning. The Director passionately believes that SCC literally positively impacted the quality of life for people, business, and industry alike. She believes that SCC’s goals are not complicated; they simply do what is needed for the people in their community to live and be successful. This also includes businesses; they are considered part of the community.”

77
SBP

SBP is a small family owned and operated business. The owners are friends who went to high school together. The majority of the employees in the company are related. The leadership of the company is composed of nine members of the family. The Manager describes the organization as being relaxed and laid back. When he refers to the decision-makers within the company he used the word “team.” His belief is that the company uses a lot of collaboration among themselves and also with their business partners when working through ideas and making decisions.

SBP does not have a mission statement. The Manager said that the company does not operate on formalities, and had achieved the goals that they have planned for. He indicated that in the absence of a mission statement, they did share values and purpose. Two examples of shared values and goals that the organization’s leaders and decision-makers agree on are sales and retaining workers. The first goal is to increase sales from $4-$5 million to $10 million for 2007. The shared value was to retain their current employees who have helped to grow the business.

Partnership Objectives

SCC

The workforce development department was formed in 1991. The college president at that time was very much driven in economic development and interested in working with and supporting it. The President began staffing the department in July of 1991. The Director believes that cold calling was an effective tool for getting to know the business community and building relationships with them. She explained
how they launched their initial contact plan, “Our first action in October, 1991 was taking the phonebook in a little office and calling businesses to make them aware of our existence, and ask for the opportunity to come out and talk with them about our services.” SCC obtained its first contract in December 1991 with a chemical company (that was out of the college’s district) for supervisory and leadership training for $3,600.

SCC served as an intermediary for State funding, as well as for private funding from nationally established manufacturing industry associations. The Director believed that by making non-traditional sources of funding available for education and workforce development, it created a win-win dependency dynamic that brought partnerships together. SCC’s workforce development department operates on a financial basis of total cost recovery, which means they have to get training contracts to pay their bills. She believes that the college expected the business support unit to be self-supporting, however the college also accepted that it might not turn a profit because of its service to the community. The Director stated, “It’s ok if we break even because we are providing a community service, but the college does not want this type of entity to end up costing money to provide a community service.”

SBP

Most of the hourly employees of SBP could not speak English well, which caused a communication gap between line workers and supervisors. As a result, production slowed and SBP was not reaching its manufacturing goals. SCC conducted English as a Second Language (ESL) assessment on all of the non-English
speaking employees to determine their levels of fluency. The data from the assessment resulted in SCC conducting ESL classes for the employees that yielded the desired outcomes for a fluency and literacy solution for the company.

The Manager believes that in order to achieve this objective, the non-English speaking employees would need to gain better use of the English language. He sought out the aid of SCC because of language barriers that existed between supervisors and hourly workers. Although the state provided grant funding for workplace literacy, the application timeline for the grant was one year. The Manager said, “We did not want to wait for one year; we needed intervention immediately even if it meant that we had to pay for the training ourselves.” Barriers to communication created anxiety among the workers, but also yielded low productivity for the business partner thereby affecting its ability to earn the profits the leadership agreed upon.

**Formal Documents**

**SCC**

The Director explained that in the beginning of the partnership there were no formalities, including documents. She said that they communicated through personal conversations, and exchanged ideas about choices of solutions. Their conversations were clear enough for SCC to understand SBP’s needs. The Director perceived the actual conversations to be the most important tool between them. After the partnership was well established and resulted in numerous training contracts, documentation was added in order to keep track of customers and services. The Director explained that it did not take long for SBP to trust them with their workforce.

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needs, and also with their employees. The Director said, “Trust is a huge factor in establishing partnerships with industry because you become involved with the intricacies of the organization.”

The Director believed that businesses were attracted to the institution because of state and local funding. However, she emphasized that it was the relationship with the business leader that gave the partnership meaning. During the interview, the Director reflected on her personal relationship with SBP’s business leader. The business leader’s mother and the Director of SCC were schoolmates in their earlier years; and in their present lives they shared common interests in community events. The Director cited historical events in the business leader’s growing up years and even his college experience. She said, “Our families go way back, and we share the same values, travel in similar social circles, and share a commitment to community.”

The interview with the suburban community college began at the business partner’s facility, and included a tour. The Director was extremely familiar with the workers, called them by name, their history with the company, and their success stories. The Director says, “You really get to know people, and what they need in their work experience to help them be successful.” There was a demonstration of camaraderie between the Director and the workers within the furniture manufacturing company. She pointed out the different family members who work in the plant (e.g., father, mother, aunt, cousin, son, and daughter). As she walked through the plant, and the workers sensed her presence, they lifted their heads, smiled, and waved at her.
As we walked through the warehouse, the Director pointed out one of the large families who worked in the plant. She told the story of the family's matriarch who is the grandmother, and how she takes care of their home and ensures her family has lunches made for work. The Director regularly visits the business partner's site, sometimes just to provide a professional "check in" stroking to ensure cohesiveness and keep the services of the workforce area at the community college available upon need. In order to develop partnership contracts with industry, the community college's instructors make site visits to assess environments, talk through issues, and determine training needs. She said,

We place much effort on making the right match between instructor and business culture. Our instructors spend some time teaching in two-hour blocks to get to know what the product is, and develop a comfort level with the people they will be working with.

SBP

Formalized documents were not used to establish or define the partnership, other than signing checks to pay for the services and for state approved grants. The Manager said that SCC came to their plant and listened to their needs. "They were able to talk us through their program offerings, what could be customized to our specific needs, how training would work for our employees, and the benefits that we would see after training." The partnership between SBP and SCC was strengthened by the personal relationships they shared in common. The Manager explained that his
mother and the Director at SCC were schoolmates together, who interacted at class reunions, picnics, and community events.”

**Partnership Benefits**

**SCC**

The Director believed that the partnership with SBP was working to the institution's satisfaction, both internally and externally. She believed an important factor that contributed to being able to service the business partner well was the strong and well connected infrastructure within the institution. For example, the credit side of the college work to develop academic courses and training programs that help equip students and workers with new knowledge for employability, while the non-credit side works to designing and implementing training strategies for these courses. She felt that internal partnerships actually helped to sustain the external relationships.

The Director believed that the benefit of having the credit and non credit sides of the institution involved together in developing workforce interventions is that the credit side delivers well in the area of academics while the non-credit side enables strong technical application of the intervention into the business partner’s actual world, shares the experience of implementation, and measures the benefits of having made the change. She stated, “We are a tight knit-group that worked together very well. We keep communication between the credit and non-credit side of the college open and frequent.” The Director believed that there were quicker returns on the non-
credit side of the college where one can see instant results with and for business partners. She made the assessment;

On the non-credit side of the college you are working directly with the individuals, you see an immediate impact. On the credit side of the college, you would have to wait until after they are in classes for one year or 1½ years before you are starting to see a return on your investment.

Every college in the state was partially funded under a business and industry preparation grant for operating expenses. The three basic areas targeted for funding were 1) curriculum development, 2) marketing, and 3) outreach. The State funds were earmarked for workforce and economic development. The college did not provide a budget for the workforce division that supports partnerships because it was expected that it would come by way of training contracts from existing and new business and industry partnerships.

The livelihood of the workforce development department rested on training contracts. The Director explained that the pricing strategy used when she began at the college was based on a formula that began with a 1.3 markup to business partners. The markup covered the instructor, salary, books and materials, and some of the time account executives spent on the project. Six years ago their pricing strategy was a 1.5 markup, and July 1, 2006 it went up to 2.0.

The Director believed that partnerships are a lucrative stream of revenue for the community college because of the reduction in state aid, and the price value they
are compensated for when developing and implementing workforce solutions. She indicated that SCC was not the only recipient vying for this revenue, but there were industry competitors who benefited also. Because community colleges are administrators of State funds, these outside consultants had to work through SCC in order to gain access to the monies. The Director understood that it was not practical for SCC to think it will have all of the training and development business in the area. By her assessment, literacy issues and low basic skills competencies among workers is a huge problem to solve for just one provider. There were instances with SCC where consultants or a college instructor would do the leg work just like the community college would to make contact with an area business to pitch their training and development program for sale. The Director said that the company would not sign a contract with them since project consultants could not administer grant dollars. Project consultants' goal is to run their own program through SCC so they can avail themselves of the 50% reimbursement. An example would be a training contract that began at $10,000 would be priced through SCC at $12,500. Project consultants would receive 50% reimbursement of $12,500. SCC would retain $2,500 for doing the paper work and filing the correct forms.

The Director believes what was also working well were the efforts they used in designing the best match between account managers and instructors, their personalities, and their strengths to the business partner they will work closely with. The staff worked very closely with SBP’s employees, knew them by name, and even who was having a baby. Maintaining high visibility with the business partner worked
well, and helped to facilitate easy accessibility, good and open dialogue about the business’ needs.

SBP

The Manager believed that although they knew where they were having problems among their workforce and where to go for help, SCC actually possessed the tools and business savvy to make it happen. He said that “We have a simple manufacturing plant where our workers tend to be loyal, family oriented, with little drama. So, once they removed the communication barriers and helped to improve basic reading, writing, and math skills...everything looked great!”

Partnership Challenges

SCC

The suburban business partner explained how pleased he was with the partnership with SCC. “There is nothing about the partnership with SCC that is not working well from SCC.” The business partner shook his head in a no response motion as he made his reply. He continued to express positive accolades that were summed up to say that the partnership with SCC had been really great because of results seen in their plant.

The Manager believed they achieved a more relaxed work environment among their line workers because communication had significantly improved. He said that the workers had become capable of understanding and using the English language better. He further explained how important it was for organizational leaders to create
an inviting and satisfying work environment for their workers. He believed that, “People will want to come to work, they will be productive, and they will want to come back again, and again.”

The Director felt that, if given the opportunity by the business partner, SCC could have done a lot more for SBP in the way of plant layout. She believed that enhancing the workspace and making modifications to improve production would return greater benefits in their workforce than SBP have received. SCC’s connectivity and alliances with local and national manufacture organizations broadened their knowledge and ability to intervene in areas of Lean Manufacturing.

SCC had a 10 year affiliation with a regional manufacturing center which is part of a nationwide manufacturing extension partnership, partially funded by the federal government through the National Institute of Standards and Technology for the efforts of economic development. The focus of this affiliation was Lean Manufacturing. The Director believed the business partner was hesitant to attempt a radical change to their familiar work flow because of the potential loss in revenue that a factory redesign and training would cost.

SBP

When asked what was not working well with the partnership, the reply was “There is nothing that is not working well from SCC. They have done a great job, and our manufacturing plant is better off for it.” SBP was contemplating future partnership needs with SCC. The Manager stated, “Of course, we could do better with leadership training for our supervising staff.”
Changes in Partnership Dynamics and Lessons Learned

**SCC**

The Director believed that they could do more in the area of leadership training. She said that when one upgrades skills among the workforce, it becomes imperative to upgrade the skills among the leaders and thereby increase capacity for the organization. She perceived that when improvement is made in one skill level within a company, there is always an impact to the levels above and below. She believed that more help could be provided to strengthen their leadership by training supervisors and even management.

**SBP**

The suburban business partner thought that, given the opportunity to do it over, he would have moved faster to gain a relationship with SCC. He said that his organization made several attempts to resolve the communication issues on its own, but without much improvement. “I would have bought training services earlier, and would have done it faster. The lessons learned really exist on our side of the partnership as the business. We would have established a more structured training program because if you stop one process in manufacturing, it impacts the whole; that is risky.”
Economic Development and Partnerships

SCC

The Director emphatically believed that there was no difference between workforce development and economic development. She did not believe that one could separate them because the dependency they have on each other is affixed. Her direct quote was,

When you develop people, you are developing the economy. You have to consider how long an employee will stay with a company, or how long a company will need the same number of employees. Workforce development provides opportunities of lateral mobility to stay employed and upward mobility to improve how you want to live. Partnerships are extremely necessary because they provide revenue so that we can build workforce solutions and academic programs to meet the changing needs of our region.

SBP

The Manager indicated that they will continue to buy training from SCC. He said that the employee base is international, so being able to train and improve their language will be with them for a long while. He shared a true and interesting story of why economic development will continue to encourage and create partnerships between SCC and SBP:

Everyone in our manufacturing plant are related and Mexican. We had a great worker who was committed, and exemplified an outstanding
work ethic. We wanted to promote him to supervisor, but the language barrier was deep. SCC helped to train him in ESL. When he learned to read and write in English, he was able to finally, and for the first time in his life, help his elementary age daughter with her homework. She made the merit roll for the first time last Spring! Who knows, when she grows up, she may work for us, or lead the company. But our involvement and investment in people in this community bring these types of results. If we did not connect with SCC, our company would have continued to struggle with communication and information gaps as well as have had a stressed workforce.

Partnerships will need to continue and increase because of a constantly changing and global society.

Summary of Suburban Community College Partnership

The suburban community college Director believed that building training needs in collaboration with business and industry was central to their mission. The mission of SCC, which included open access into the community college, and the personal relationships developed with the business partner, are components that caused SBP to buy more training contracts. The business partner, did not have a mission statement, or believe that the absence of one inhibited growth or the achievement of the organization’s goals. However, the organization’s leaders operated on agreed upon goals and values, and were content to have shared vision.
The partnership between SCC and SBP took on the practice of the business partner’s philosophy in that training contracts were developed based upon mutually agreed upon goals and expectations. SCC served as an administrator of State funds for their business partners, which enticed the relationship. Dependency on state aid played a role for SBP because the furniture manufacturer was challenged to continue production having poor communication among and with his workforce. The need to have a workforce solution that addressed lags in production, and that negatively impacted revenue was crucial.

The sustainability of the relationship was based on trust. Trust was critical because the community college had to access SBP’s workers on a regular basis in order to improve workers’ skills. The population of workers in the suburban partnership was non-English speaking or resided in homes with foreign-speaking family members. English as a Second Language courses were provided along with help to improve basic skills in reading, writing, and math. Although the partnership’s strategies were developed for the furniture manufacturing plant, the benefits of the workforce solutions extended into the homes and families of these workers.

Workforce development was a central focus in the suburban community college partnership because of basic skills deficiencies among workers. SCC and SBP collectively believed that gaps in basic skills competency is wide spread among adults in the region; this would include language barriers. Both respondents believed that workforce development was inter-connected with economic development; you could not have one without the other.
Urban Community College Partnership Case

Urban Community

The urban community had the highest number of persons that reported themselves as "mixed race," and the highest number of persons that reported their ethnicity as "Native American." The population was 119,128 people, which represented 49,505 households, of which 30.0% had children under the age of 18 living with them. 35.8% were married and living together. 17% had a female head of household with no husband present, and 42.7% were non families. The racial makeup of the city was 61% White (non Hispanic), 22% Black, 10% Hispanic, 5% two or more races, and 2% American Indian.

The median income for a household in the city is $34,833, and the median income for a family is $41,283. Males have a median income of $32,648 versus $27,051 for females. About 13% of families and 17% of the population are below the poverty line, including 23% of those under age 18 and 9.0% of those age 65 or over.

Urban Community College

Urban Community College (UCC) meets with clients in business and industry, government, education, health care, and non-profit organizations to define key business goals and to determine needs for training, consulting, and other services. UCC has implemented solutions in over 350 organizations throughout its region, setting a tone for continuous improvement, and helping companies maintain a competitive edge.
UCC became ISO 9001-2000 Certified in 2003 through the Chamber Certification Assessment Services Limited of Litchfield, England. The registration signifies that UCC has met international standards for consistency of quality throughout the organization, and has a system in place for continuously improving customer satisfaction in quality products and services. UCC student enrollment is 21,000, and includes 51% women, 46% males. The average student age is 29 years. UCC has 400 International students from 65 different countries. 32% of UCC students are employed fulltime, and 36% are employed part-time.

Urban Business Partner

UBP is an automotive manufacturing plant in a large metropolitan Midwest city. The plant houses 1,000 metal tool and die workers. The leadership at the local plant is decentralized, and is supported by on-sight representatives of the workers’ union to ensure the safety, welfare, and well-being of employees. The plant is one out of 30 United States-based automotive plants.

Strategic Goals for Partnership

UCC

The Director provided a brief history of the community college in order to bring the partnership with UBP up to the time when he became involved. He explained that the workforce development division of UCC has been in existence for 30 of the 50 years UCC has been in existence and the strategies then were designed to address future impacts. According to the Director, UCC came to an early
understanding that it played a critical role in and for the business community. The Director said that the mission of UCC is to serve the people in its community, and ensure opportunities to learn and enrich their quality of life.

UCC was expecting to receive fewer resources during the year from the state than in previous years. Therefore, the need to stimulate existing partnerships and develop new partnerships became more urgent. One strategy was to reduce course sections, but maintain program offerings. The Director said that this stratagem limits the number of course sections students will have to choose from, but it will allow UCC to continue to provide the quality programs he believed were critical to student development and education.

UBP

UBP was able to quickly and openly state the purpose of its strategic plan, which specifically targeted a capable and ready workforce. The President of the union indicated that by nature of the automobile manufacturing industry, speed, quality, and cost are always top of mind issues, but also their greatest challenges.

Partnership Objectives

UCC

Many of the partnerships between UCC and UBP are long standing and multi-faceted relationships because of the number of years both organizations have been in existence. Under the current regime, their goal was to expand partnerships with the manufacturing company, and build robust training and development solutions that
would aid in achieving their production and financial goals. UBP wanted to change its business strategy to that of global manufacturing as a different way of doing business. The Director explained that global manufacturing required the need for decision-makers to be closer to the action; it actually pushes a lot of the decision-making down to the floor among line workers. He said previously, decision-making with UBP existed in higher employee ranks, but this slowed down production, and gave the responsibility of producing a quality product to a limited few. UCC focused their efforts on teaching teambuilding strategies and decision-making to line workers so that they could make the transition to a global manufacturing system.

The automotive business partner opened a new manufacturing plant in 2006 with 3,200 employees. All of the new employees were required to go through the new global manufacturing training provided by UCC before they started work at the plant. This massive training required UCC to place trainers on site for instruction and observation. The Director believed that establishing a business-to-business relationship as opposed to institution-to-student relationship moves the college closer to training, which means UCC was able to respond to business needs.

As UCC moved closer to the training needs of UBP, basic skills deficiencies among the workers became more evident. UCC began basic skill assessments with employees to determine competencies relative to the complexity of the employees’ job responsibilities. In addition to identifying training needs for incumbent employees to help increase literacy competencies, they needed to understand the
reading and math levels of new employees before moving on to more technological training needs within the plant.

Being in close proximity to testing and training exercises helped UCC make a discriminating evaluation of its own course and program offerings. The Director believed that training needs of UBP and other business partners in the region needed to be in alignment with available academic programs. Although this need was valid, UCC reduced sections of courses as a response to diminishing state aid, and yet maintain an effective program roster.

An exception to this decision was the developmental labs (reading, writing, and math) that were expanded because the demand is so great and it spreads across the entire private and working community. The Director explained that the need to increase literacy among workers in basic skills do not just exist in the business community. The reading level required to do an entry level job in the automotive industry is significantly higher today than five years ago. He said that some of the hourly positions in the automotive industry demand the reading comprehension level of a high school English teacher because the workers are reading highly technical data, it must be read quickly, comprehended without exception, and interpreted correctly. He further explained that employee required reading today is much more complex, and must be accomplished quickly. This translates into much higher reading level demands. This demand is created because instructions that used to be given verbally must now be read and interpreted and the job requirements are much more technical.
Literacy issues exist in a dichotomy for UCC; remedial and re-tooling. The Director said that UCC offered a basic college level math class (105), and then they had another class called 050, which was developmental. Fifty percent of the students at UCC could not do the math to get into 050. He believed that developmental education at the community college is a major strain on a budget, and that the phenomenon of “an ever-ready workforce” is what society faces all of the time – “It’s where the rubber meets the road.” At the same time basic skills and comprehension levels are cognizant; the requirements in the workplace have gone up. The Director believed the gap was growing bigger; it is an issue that community colleges faced on a daily basis only to work on closing it again.

He believed that remedial issues in adult education stemmed from the K-12 educational system. He said that one of the solutions being used to help close the gap in their region is an alternative school that provides a high school completion program, but also relevant academic training to ready students for the workforce.

UBP

UBP needed the community college to help upgrade technology skills of its workers, but also train workers on health and safety. The President of the union explained that UBP did not always have current technology. In earlier years, new employees would go through an apprenticeship program to learn how to do their jobs, and that was all of the training they received; nothing had changed for years and years. Due to the increase of death and injury, previous ideas and behaviors relative
to health and safety in the plant was not acceptable by employees, union, government, or the public.

The automotive industry slowly began to realize a lot of the skilled trades as well as other people in the plant (supervisors, engineers, and supervisors) needed more training. Also, it became unacceptable that 15 people a year in the plant were killed due to lack of health and safety training; this was no longer acceptable to anyone. The President of the union said that because of the radical change in how the plant would operate and work toward better safety of its workers, the industry decided that an increase in comprehensive training was the best solution.

UCC was asked to help train the apprenticeship workforce that required applied math and blueprint reading. UBP did some of its own training, particularly in the highly skilled and technology trades. However, in some cases it was more cost effective to use UCC when the courses were already established and available.

Formal Documents

UCC

The formal contract that existed between the two organizations provided details on the training program design. It identified the training that would be provided, staffing the skills centers, costs, and expectations. The contract was reviewed yearly and signed. Also, tuition reimbursement was offered to help supplement education for employees in the automotive industry for traditional education or personal enrichment. The Director stated, "The automotive business partner was a strong supporter of education throughout its corporation, not just
locally. Their national union affiliate is the gatekeeper to monitor and manage such processes.

A critical component of UCC’s relationship with the automotive partner was to know, understand, and accept that the business partner will never come to the table of discussion or participation without its national union affiliate. When they made decisions and spoke, they did it in one voice. The Director explained the concept the collaborative operated with;

This is an absolute collaborative effort in the truest sense of the word; there are no secrets between us, and anyone within the organization can tell you what we are trying to accomplish. The formula is UCC + automotive business partner + the national union affiliate.

UBP

UBP is a unionized company. The President replied light-heartedly, and with little concern, “I am sure there are documents that are reviewed and signed. Each year new contracts are given for new services, and I am sure they have all the fine details listed in them.” UBP and UCC review contracts together annually. UBP also provide training and education reimbursement for employees where documentation is involved. The President said, “We look at the documents when we need to, but the formalized documents are not the focus of our partnership with UCC.”

Partnerships between UBP and UCC have been long standing relationships. Employees of UCC and UBP have switched between the automotive manufacturing company and the community college for second careers, and yet they remain...
colleagues. The President proudly stated his commitment to the partnership and association with the college. At the time of this study, he was the Chairman of the Board of Directors for UCC, and the President of the local chapter of the national union. He worked with the Dean of Technology when she was brought into the manufacturing plant. Prior to that, she was an elementary school principal. The President said, "We have many crossovers in our region and have for a long time."

**Partnership Benefits**

**UCC**

UCC believed the partnership was working well for it because of its contribution to the economic needs of its region, which is achieved through upgrading the skills of workers. One gain of the partnership is revenue. The Director believes that UCC was fortunate to experience other benefits from this partnership. UCC was able to stay abreast of current technologies and trends working with industry. Partnerships kept higher education much closer to the workforce, particularly in technical areas like technical and healthcare careers.

**UBP**

UCC already has computer classes, physics, and applied math, blue print reading and more. The President explained that there is no use in reinventing the wheel; UCC already has the training on the shelf and ready to use. The President believed that the partnership with UCC worked favorably for them because of the
State's intervening with ready funds. He said that UCC has been able to get additional training monies that they would not ordinarily have access to.

**Partnership Challenges**

**UCC**

The Director believed their challenges were due to the wearing of multiple hats and having a mission that focused on serving people, while trying to stay competitive themselves with competing industries. Competing with consultants is always a challenge. The Director explained that UCC spent much time and effort to help educate the business community of the value of their training programs. Conversations on costs are often used as a negotiating tool by business and industry as an effort to drive fees down. The Director indicated that much time is spent with business and industry explaining that they are a business unit also that has to pay bills. The Director said "We offer a service, a good service to business, industry and to the community."

Another challenge for UCC is brand recognition. The Director believed that because of multiple name changes with the workforce development unit of the institution, it has given an idea of instability to business and industry leaving them somewhat confused. He said

We have had several different names throughout our history. When businesses call us, they still do not recognize us as the workforce development area of UCC. Businesses do not always recognize that the workforce development area as its own entity, nor do they
understand what we have to offer, and the benefits of purchasing our training contracts. This confuses the issue of pricing being different than that of the traditional community college; we are a business unit.

UBP

The President indicated that challenges are minimized, almost non-existent because UBP makes clear distinctions in the type of training they purchased from UCC. He said, “It would be difficult to find challenges with this arrangement.” The President believed that setting the proper expectation with the institution increased UCC’s ability for success and reduced failure rates. The President said, “We do not expect them to be as far along on the leading edge of technology that we might be in our plant. It’s not practical for UCC to try and keep up with the continuously increasing technology demands because it’s so expensive and it changes so fast.” UBP had its own industry instructors who are trained and specialized in high-end robotics technology. The President stated, “We are pretty close to having the perfect world right now between UBP and UCC.”

Economic Development

UCC

The Director believes that partnerships exist for economic development. As long as business and industry need skilled and ready workers, partnerships will be necessary. He explained that when the automotive manufacturing company came into the region, a whole host of companies that support the automotive industry came with
them. Training needs were not limited to the automotive manufacturing business partner, but it also extended to supporting businesses. A large part of UCC’s energies has been spent on the support structures for the automotive manufacturing industry; that is, smaller businesses that grew as the auto manufacturing company grew.

**UBP**

The President believed that as a business partner, and a member of the community, UBP could not work in a vacuum; it has to have partnerships. Everything UBP does focuses on the tri-county as a whole, and not on the company. When it comes to the idea of economic development, the President believes that everything is related. Employers make their location decisions based on available resources and retention. The automotive plant was in the process of buying more property and partnering with state and local schools to build a school of the arts, which is a $150 million project. This is huge for attracting people and companies to the area. The President ended by explaining the inter-connectivity of the community, including K-12 educational structures, graduation requirements, college entrance requirements, and employability skill levels.

UBP donated a plastic molding injection machine to help create new skills training opportunities for students in the region. The donations made by UBP are items that became obsolete for industry, but created upgrading to cutting edge for the community college. The technology donation to UCC provided the college with an opportunity to expand its program and course offerings to students who were interested in jobs in the plastic molding field, as well as the ability to develop ready
workers. The President believes, "Everything is inter-meshed, and everyone has to work together to produce a highly educated and trained workforce within the community."

Summary of Urban Community College Partnership

The urban community college partnership was established for over 30 years; many years before the informants joined their respective organizations. Participants believed that the mission statements of their institutions required the building of partnerships simply because of the diverse and ever-changing business needs experienced in their region. The partnership came together because of long standing professional and personal relationships existing between leaders in both organizations. Participants in the urban community college partnership experienced frequent exchanges of resources in that employees and previous business needs included assessment testing, re-tooling incumbent workers, and training skilled laborers. The college’s broad academic program selections were due in part to the philanthropic practices of the business partner donating technology equipment for course and program development.

The urban partnership was faced with challenges of having to provide remedial training for workers in order to increase the level of basic skills competencies for their partnering business. The respondents believed that the concept of “remedial” is a moving target for both organizations, and required defining. The urban partnership was also faced with a dichotomy of remedial training issues in that,
while they worked to increase basic skills or even highly trained skills, the minimum expected training increased to a higher level.

The first example of remediation is inherited from the K-12 educational system where basic reading, writing, and math skills are not demonstrated in students who graduate high school. The second example of remediation is the one that occurs in an ever-changing environment that requires a re-tooling every so often, especially in the technology and highly skilled labor areas. Respondents of both organizations believe that workforce development was essential to economic development. They believe that companies are concerned about the quality of life they would be able to provide for their employees. The respondents believe that a good education system encourages good companies to do business in the region.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the data from three case studies that focused on community college partnerships with business and industry. The cases researched in this study consisted of three Midwest community colleges representing rural, suburban, and urban communities, and included a business or industry partner that was serviced by the community college in its region. The three business partners represented three distinct industries: insurance, furniture manufacturing, and automobile manufacturing.

Six interviews were conducted with key informants whose roles within their respective organizations focused on workforce development and maintaining
partnerships. There were four themes that emerged from the interviews: mission, state aid, relationship building, and workforce development.

Emergent Themes

Mission

The community college respondents were resolved that their institutions’ mission statements were well defined and focused on service to the community. The respondent from RCC believed that the governance being highly centralized, improved corporate accountability, which stimulated trust among the leaders and gave authority to each one to achieve the expectations of the partnerships based on the needs of RBP. RCC believed that the leader’s role of the institution had become the culture of the organization. The partnering business respondents viewed their guiding principles in the same vein as a mission statement. The respondent of RBP believed that the organization’s decentralized management structure provided flexibility for frequent changes experienced by organizations to how they do business. Collectively, both of the respondents from the rural community college case believed that operating by strategic goals were too limiting because it restricted their ability to be flexible to the ever changing environments they operate in.

The respondent from SCC believed its mission statement was specific and also included the business and industry community along with individual students as recipients of its training and educational services. Similarly, the SBP was a family run business, eschewed mission statements but felt that their shared values and two
clear goals drove company priorities, which include maximizing their workers’ skills and confidence.

The respondent of UCC believed that its existence was to ensure the people in its region have learning and enrichment opportunities to improve their quality of life and standard of living. The respondent believed that UBP being part of the business and industry community played an active role in helping to accomplish its mission through partnership. The respondent from UBP believed its mission to establish a ready workforce was clear, and that speed, quality, and costs were the motivation for carrying out the mission.

State Aid Dependency

State aid played a vital role in helping both organizations recognize the benefits of joining together. It provided the impetus for RCC and RBP to find common ground. State aid was the common thread between RCC and RBP because both organizations focused on workforce needs. RCC focused on workforce needs from the academic and training perspective, while RBP saw workforce needs from an employability and competency point of view. Obtaining the aid of the rural community college helped RBP operate in a more productive manner that also enabled them to achieve succession planning with a skilled workforce.

Likewise, state aid encouraged the partnership between SCC and SBP. However, the timeframe to apply for state aid had past for that year. SBP did not want to wait for the next application period because communication challenges among its workforce had become strenuous. SBP purchased training contracts from
SCC for literacy and basic skills assessments for its workforce without having received the financial supplement from the state.

UCC and UBP operated in a state that did not provide funding supplements for workforce development. UCC sought partnership with UBP to help fill the gap of declining state aid to the community college sector. UBP’s enticement to the partnership was based on the available academic and training programs offered by UCC that helped to improve UBP’s workforce.

**Relationship through Entrepreneurship**

RCC demonstrated entrepreneurship through its ability to properly interpret the language and business needs of RBP. Sharing the business dialect played a role in the business partner feeling secure that RCC understood their workforce development needs. RBP demonstrated trust through philanthropic gifts to RCC as an investment of good faith and confidence in the program offerings, and trust in the leadership at RCC to do what was in the best interest of RCC and the community. This resulted in good responsiveness in RCC’s ability to develop sound and quality resolution to upgrade the basic skills of RBP’s workforce and deliver solutions that would positively impact basic skills improvements of reading, writing, and math.

SCC used careful consideration to place instructors from the community college among SBP’s workforce with compatible personalities, as well as comparable Spanish-speaking skills. SCC instructors made frequent and lengthy contact with SBP and its workforce in order to become familiar with its people, culture and
intrinsic needs. The informant for SCC believed that the community college took
careful attention to approach SBP's workforce gingerly.

UCC demonstrated relationship through entrepreneurship by aligning its
course and program offerings with the business partner’s needs. Additionally, the
UBP ran its manufacturing plant 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In order to meet
training and development needs, UCC’s instructor’s hours mirrored the working
hours of the plant. At the time of upgrades, UBP donated outgoing technology to
UCC in order to perpetuate the continuation of training a skilled labor force.

Although each organization had specific goals they were seeking to obtain, the
partnerships were faced with common issues relevant to education and workforce
strength in their respective regions. The gap consisted of a good and solid basic
educational system that would attract new business and industry into the region. The
community colleges and business and industry partners mutually believed that having
the ability to achieve a solid educational system would provide a new income stream,
a continuous flow of a highly trained ready workforce, and a retention component that
would create sustainability.

Workforce Development

Workforce development was an ever-present issue encountered by community
colleges and business partners. The community colleges identified that a significant
number of students are challenged to complete their academic programs because of
their abilities to demonstrate basic reading, writing, math, and comprehension

109
skills. Community colleges invested substantial resources in remedial course offerings to help raise literacy levels among students.

Community colleges were perceived by business and industry as bridges for workforce development because they can immediately address remedial needs for employers. Business partners use the community colleges to conduct skill assessment of incumbent staff basic skills competencies, and re-tooling an incumbent workforce in order upgrade skills for ever-changing work environments. The results of the cases and their emergent themes will be further discussed in Chapter V.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH, AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was an inquiry about the relationships between three community colleges; one each from a rural, suburban, or urban area in partnership with business or industry in their respective region. This chapter begins with an overview of the research study that focuses on community college partnerships with business and industry for economic development. The theoretical construct for this research was Resource Dependency. Resource Dependency Theory adds to the understanding of how, as stated in Chapter 2, organizations are unavoidably linked and must contend with other organizations with whom they are interdependently related (Morphew, 1997).

Resource dependency was developed by James Pfeffer and Gerald Salancik in the 1970s in response to the reduction of resources leading to economic uncertainty. Pfeffer and Salancik's study was based upon the suggestion that if government and state funding given in support of an organization is diminishing, then understanding the value of how the organization is working toward continuation of its existence is an alternative solution.

A summary of this research as it relates to current literature is presented in this chapter. The summary focuses on the emergent themes from Chapter IV and how
they relate to the results of the study. Recommendations for future study as well as conclusions are also presented at the end of this chapter.

Overall Summary

The purpose of this descriptive case study was to determine what dynamics, if any, enabled partnerships between community colleges with business and industry. Also, what, if any, impact do these relationships have on economic development within the region. The study was conducted to identify the common goals shared among organizations engaged in partnerships with community colleges in order to apply an understanding of what works and does not work in existing partnerships for future relationships (Erlandson et. al, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Review of Emergent Themes

Mission

Participants in this study indicated that strategic goals are not as primary of a focus than are their organization's mission statements. Community college participants perceived their missions to be centered on the practice of serving diverse communities through educational opportunities to improve quality of life. Keller (1983), in his seminal book on strategic planning, argues that mission statements are a necessary part of an institution's strategic planning process. All three community college respondents indicated that their mission statements are distinctively clear, providing them with the direction and flexibility to achieve their individual job responsibilities.
Each community college leader indicated that, based on the missions of their respective organizations, their actions towards establishing business and industry partnerships are driven by the charge of their institutions; their mission statements. An examination of each community college’s mission statement resulted in findings that centered on the quality of life for the community it serves. The rural, suburban, and urban colleges concur that their missions are more challenging than using strategic goals. They believed that mission statements are confrontational to issues surrounding the challenges of academia, which required a solution.

Birnbaum (2000) posits that mission statements, like other management trends, found their way into the academy under the ideology of “soft governance.” He says that the theoretical foundations of soft governance are located in the concepts of how organizational cultures are created over time through the interaction of people, and the cognitive processes through which they come collectively to share perceptions and “make sense” of what they are doing.

Other theorists point to the value of mission statements in expressing a "vision" for the institution's future (Lenning & Micek, 1976; Schwerin, 1980; Carruthers & Lott, 1981; Martin, 1985; Nanus, 1992). Postsecondary institutions’ mission statements have produced a more clearly defined understanding of the role they play in organizational life, and have two potential benefits. First, a mission statement is instructional. A clear mission helps organizational members distinguish between activities that conform to the things that are important and considered critical to the purpose of the institution and those that do not. Second, a shared sense of
purpose or vision has the capacity to inspire and motivate those within an institution and to communicate its characteristics to key external constituents through behavior and modeling values, and history (Drucker, 1973; Keller, 1983; Parekh, 1977; Smith, 1979; Hartley, 2002).

The community college respondents contend that the leaders' personality that guided each of their institutions is wrought with an entrepreneurial spirit of delivering learning solutions specific to the needs of their customers. They perceived that individuals within the institutions who maintain and stimulate existing relationships and develop new ones are successful because they have an entrepreneurial spirit that looks "within the box, but outside of the solution" to develop workforce interventions specific to their business partner's needs. Resource Dependency Theory asserts that organizations are assumed to be comprised of internal and external alliances that emerge from social exchanges that are formed to influence and control behavior (Morphew, 1997).

The rich and meaningful relationships between the leaders of the organizations (college and industry) have been sustained through intentional actions of building camaraderie among themselves. Collectively, an entrepreneurial spirit of delivering learning solutions does require that each community college know and understand its customer's needs and desired outcomes. Additionally, their ability to continue to service their students and communities depends on repeat business with current partners, and their ability to establish new relationships. Therefore, stimulating these relationships is very important.
Likewise, the three business partners believe that entrepreneurship is key to the continuation of relationships with community colleges because it un-leashes the power of flexibility on the part of the community college, and for the benefit of the business and industry partners. Business partners believed they saw clear demonstrations by the community college respondents of being empowered to fix their specific problems. Standardized models were not used as interventions; the “one size fits all” concept. Business partners unanimously declared that, while strategic plans and mission statements can have good value for organizations, their strategy was to build relationships in order to build their businesses.

State Aid Dependency

Community colleges’ objectives in forming partnerships were to create a new stream of revenue that would provide enhancements, including technology capabilities, to current and future program offerings throughout the college. Business and industry partners had a need to improve the competencies of their workforce through basic skills of reading, writing, math, and technology training, while also looking to future needs of developing their workforce. The reduction in state aid and local budgets to the community colleges, but the availability of state funds for workforce development motivated the development of partnerships on the part of community colleges (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Kurz & Scannell, 2004). The community colleges agree that their institutions are no longer funded as they have been in previous years by state and county sources, and must find other; non-traditional sources.
The reduction in financial resources prompted community colleges to seek alternative funding sources. Likewise, from the industry perspective, the deficient levels of basic skills affecting productivity among the work force, and the lack of available workers in skilled trades encouraged businesses to look to the community college as a business solutions provider. Companies’ current and future performance was in jeopardy of experiencing diminishing returns. The need for skill-specific courses had become pressing because of the deficiencies in the labor force. Unskilled workers caused delays in productivity, and at times, even a threat to health and life. By the testimonies of industry and business partners, their workforce had low basic skills capabilities, as well as future projections of a shortage of skilled workers.

The need for community colleges and industry to develop resourcefully stimulating and reciprocal relationships is essential to their growth and continuation. Resource Dependency Theory explains solutions to a reduction or loss of resources by advocating for specific sorts of cooperative partnerships between institutions of higher education, in this case community colleges, and other organizations (Feldman, 1987; Lovell, 2000; Pfeffer, 1987).

Community college and industry partners who participated in this study consistently indicated that, although these partnerships were enticed through state aid, the development of partnerships was brought about through relationships and informal methods or circumstances. Formal documents were not used to create the partnerships. Although each of the community colleges in this study serves in different geographies, the establishment of partnerships that evolved through informal
means. In addition, the continuations of these partnerships were stimulated through the values placed on the personal friendships and connections. Opportunities for direct and personal with partners contact occurred at many levels inside and outside of the community colleges. All of the participants in this research concurred that personal relationships had an impact on the growth of business developed between the two organizations. A common thread of conversation that emerged in the interviews indicated that trust and respect for one another were priorities.

Relative to formalized documents, it is important to note that although the conception of community college partnerships with industry did not emerge through formal agreements, documents and artifacts were incorporated later into these relationships to provide meaning, direction, inspiration, and historical data collection. Two of the community colleges (RCC and SCC) indicated that they had not focused on, and in many cases had not even reviewed the formal documents. They were aware of their existence, content, and value. Other than contracted pay for services they had set up, the review, interpretation, and administration of official documents, was assigned to others in their institution. The participants in the study focused on the documents that determined and evaluated services provided by the college.

Relationship through Entrepreneurship

According to the unanimous responses recorded for this study from community college and industry partners, partnerships between community college and industry were working very well. When funds within the community colleges in this study were diminishing, leaders within the organization looked to reach outside
of the institution to build new relationships. Because this uncertainty existed, institutions looked to structure their relationships and manage this dependence by establishing unique relations with the external environment so as to acquire additional resources (Heimovics, Herman, & Coughlin, 1993; Gargiulo, 1993; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977). Most institutions do not have slack resources to act as a buffer against unsuspecting winds of change (Nicholson, 1995). Instead, institutions look to grow existing money sources or find new ones. Reciprocal benefits are sought through each relationship; that is, the relationships resulted in gains for both the college and the business partner. Reciprocity in partnerships from the business partner is achieved not only through payment for services, but also through their philanthropic generosities of funds, technology items, and the sharing of space. This benevolence provided the resources to community colleges to create new or make enhancements to needed programs, and maintain or add support staff that helped to facilitate learning. In fact, according to business and industry partners, community colleges had positioned themselves well in technology upgrades, academic programs (credit and non-credit), and instructional delivery modes to better train today's workforce, and to keep industry competitive.

Community colleges demonstrate confidence to business partners, ensuring that they have their hands on the pulse of what needs are in their respective communities. The individuals interviewed at the community colleges were closely and personally involved with their local Chamber of Commerce and other interest groups within their region, including their regional economic development office.
Industry respondents believed that the relationships that community colleges maintained with other support structures, they did it on the business partner’s behalf as a way of helping to watch “their backyards.” Connections to the happenings in their region and keeping abreast of state policies on funding issues was another way business partners perceived support from community colleges. Community colleges tracked employment trends and practices, which kept the life blood flowing through the business partner’s organizations. Reciprocal benefits of these activities to the community colleges included being able to sell more training to industry partners. There was also the advantage of philanthropic acts of shared property space and cash investments to the college.

Community colleges that participated in this research collectively maintained that they took pulses from these partnerships by using employer assessment surveys, to know what targets they were hitting for delivery expectations. They analyzed employer projections for new employees and incumbents that were replaced through retirement, turnover, and new growth. Community colleges committed to studying missing skills for incumbent employees, which included how many were in mentoring relationships, and even those who had high school diplomas. They also developed and administrated certification programs for employers, certifying basic skills competencies of current and potential workers. This was a huge benefit to an employer because interviews do not provide performance outcomes to help determine how effective candidates would be in doing their actual jobs.
Certifications, according to Cummings, Sum & Uvin (2000) provide tested results and a more work-ready resource than uncertified workers. Quick-to-market response was what industry desired. Similarly, the data collected for this research supports the notion that partnerships with business and industry provided community colleges with the ability to maintain, modify, or increase course and program offerings for the diverse communities they serve. Furthermore, the execution and delivery of learning processes were also impacted through the demands of emerging technology in many industries. Community colleges, according to Patton (2002), have a need to maintain a cutting-edge stance in areas of development and delivery in order to remain competitive.

A benefit of these partnerships for the community college was the benevolence of industry that allowed for the creation of new programs. These funds were also used to build structures that would allow for program expansion in different cities within the respective regions. A common thread in community college partnerships with business and industry was that the workforce division, which created business process improvement solutions, existed on the non-credit side of the institution. This was an added benefit to both entities because it welcomed the entrepreneurial spirit on both sides of the partnership. This means that entrepreneurial community colleges are not, as Roueche & Jones (2005) found in their research, locked into traditions or limitations in achieving or exceeding the business partner's needs. Nor does it limit business and industry from creative ways to
continue support to academic institutions in areas of workforce and economic development.

Workforce Development

The community colleges and partnering businesses both agree that, hindsight providing better visibility, they would document business relationships better so that the components of the relationships that work extremely well could be repeated and institutionalized. The gains from partnerships have been so beneficial to the institution, the business partner, and the community, that the perception was it would have been good to copy these relationships as a framework for future partnerships. The respondents concur that partnerships are the wave of the future when considering workforce and economic development needs.

Business and industry partners believed that it is the social responsibility of profiting organizations to provide benevolence towards the development of the constituency they benefit from, especially their employees. They believed that community colleges are front line deliverers of trained and ready workers for their industries. Furthermore, when need arose to upgrade knowledge and re-tool workers, community colleges provided a ‘big bang for the buck’ as administrators of state funds, providers and certifiers of basic skills, and as cutting edge for technology. The consensus of the respondents was that partnerships need to be all-inclusive of the entire community; in essence - one community, one workforce.

Data collected for this research was interesting as the notion of workforce development ran synonymous with economic development; it was perceived by the
respondents as being one in the same. The responses from all participants were short and direct. The summation of the respondents’ perceptions was that economic development cannot happen without workforce development. Common sense was the operative phrase used by all of the respondents. The participants believed that solutions to economic development belonged to all stakeholders. Elements of survival, funding, sharing of facilities, equipment and programs and constraints due to location were all present in this study and provide impetus for collaboration. Respondents spoke of the idea that it just made common sense to the business partner.

Challenges and Lessons

Needless to say, partnerships are not devoid of challenges. Community colleges and industry partners are both recipients of resources or human capital from the K-12 sector. Considering this, the gaps that exist in K-12 education within their respective regions creates a deluge of challenges within both institutions. Basic skills competencies are addressed at the community college level and in the work place, both requiring a large use of resources that address remediation of students and workers.

A common issue that exists among community colleges is the issue of needing to compete with consulting firms. Their perceptions are that businesses believed they have to spend a large amount of money on business solutions in order for them to be effective. In this same vein, costs associated with workforce development are competitive with other sources like business process improvement consultants.
Therefore, community colleges spend a sizeable amount of time and effort to convince business partners about the credibility of their pricing structure.

From the business and industry perspective, the ability to obtain quantitative data regarding the services they pay for is greatly desired. Industry partners need for community colleges to provide data and analysis that show specific benefits and outcomes from the training investments they make. Time constraints on the part of community colleges provided challenges because of the balancing act they engage in with each business partner. Partnerships are multiple and complex, Tyler (2002) points out, and time constraints did not always afford personalized attention. Keeping pace with the needs of a diverse student body and a dynamic labor market impacts the community colleges ability to respond to business needs (MacAllum, Poliakoff, & Yoder, 2004).

Implications for Practice

Entrepreneurial community colleges and industry partners are dependent on each other because of a lack of resources in two areas; 1) the financing of training needs, and 2) the development a ready workforce. These deficiencies negatively impact growth in economic development for rural, suburban, and urban communities because new companies are not attracted to areas that have a poor education system, which also prohibits the availability of a ready workforce (Mingat & Winter, 2002). Therefore, an economic development consortium that creates the educational system for the region should be developed to include all key stakeholders in local government, business and industry, institutions of higher education, and the public.
education leaders to determine the quality of education should be developed for the region (Brasington & Haurin, 2006).

The K-12 education sector will need to join the arena of economic development because the chasm of basic skills continues to deepen and reflects in adult literacy issues. Adult literacy issues are linked to employment status and occupational attainment, causing gaps in a ready workforce (Mingat & Winter, 2002). The need to address remedial skills of college students and workers from the K-12 perspective will create a 360 degree visibility into educational systems regionally, which is central to business and industry partners needs to achieve a one community, one workforce concept. According to the business and industry partners in this study, and echo by Salemi & Siegfried (1999), new businesses will not be attracted to areas with poor performing educational systems.

In each of the geographies K-12, community college, and local universities all have different completion requirements, and none connecting to the other. A review of federal educational funding is a reasonable consideration based on the data from this study. Although student financial aid is available to low income students, and provides the opportunity to receive an education, the completion or graduation statistics of these students do not support the idea that aid is a help to access education (Hovey, 1999). Federal student financial aid needs reformation to the extent of incorporating checks and balances that validate if students who receive financial aid are, in fact, achieving and completing educational programs followed by employment.
Recommendations for Further Study

This study could be extended in a number of ways. The data collected for this research was limited to three community colleges of different populations, leadership styles, and funding and program structures. Further research is recommended on community colleges with similar organizational features where a qualitative analysis could be conducted to include a larger population of individuals who support community college partnerships with business and industry. This would provide a more global perspective of the institution’s perception rather than just one decision-maker’s perspective.

Leadership styles within all organizations varied. Leadership styles specifically impact the priorities placed on the workforce development structures within each community college. These impacts involved how, if at all, the workforce development divisions were funded and supported. The workforce development division exists on the non-credit sides of all community colleges in this study. This implies that there is a distinction made between the credit and non-credit sides of the college, and could extend to funding issues of where monies are allocated, leadership support and overall perceived value. Therefore, research on presidential leadership as it relates to workforce development by community colleges would add to the knowledge based on how community colleges serve the economic development needs of their regions. Although leaders are one of the most studied administrative roles, there is still a need to understand how leaders construct their own leadership (Eddy, 2005).
Relationships that sustain community college partnerships with business and industry in this study were informal and operated with ambiguity. Documentation and recording keeping were not a main concern for sustainability in the rural and suburban partnerships. The informal relationships were uncharacteristic of market-responsive. Characteristics of market responsive community colleges are not identical; each community college has some unique features in its approach to and relationship with its business and industry partner (Hammon & MacAllum, 2003).

Relationships through entrepreneurship varied according to the local economy, the size of the business community being served, the types of industries that dominate a given area, and the level of demand for highly coveted skill sets. The urban community college partnership relationship was more multifaceted and formal compared to the rural and suburban community college partnerships. The urban community college partnership contained formal recordkeeping and both entities reviewed them together annually. Therefore, research on characteristics of a market-responsive community college is needed to determine the relationship attributes that make them highly effective in partnerships with business and industry.

Research is recommended for study in the K-12 educational structures. Community colleges and business partners in this study clearly identified that failure in the K-12 educational system becomes responsibility of community colleges and employers. Both entities are forced to place sizeable resources into repairing or addressing basic skills needs in students and employees in order to achieve their organizational goals. The industries in this study suggested that companies be
refunded from K-12 monies for training dollars their organizations spend to raise basic skills to graduation levels.

From this study on community college partnerships with business and industry emerged four themes: mission, state aid dependency, relationship through entrepreneurship, and workforce development identified common characteristics that have contributed to the success in establishing these partnerships. However, research is still needed on return of investment in terms of monetary and measurable value for the business partner in order to determine the financial value of these relationships.

Chapter Summary

Are community college partnerships with business and industry working well? The data collected from this research indicated that yes, undoubtedly partnerships are working very well, and they are on the rise (Martin & Samels).

The respondents in this study indicated as others contend (Lynton, 1984; Maurrasse, 2001; Trubowitz & Longo, 1997) that the driving force for these partnerships is to gain additional resources.

The resource sought by community colleges is revenue. Business and industry partners sought skilled, more highly educated and work ready employees. The business partners looked to the community colleges to help close the gap on basic skills needs in reading, math, and writing. In the case of SBP, the need for employees to improve their English, reading, speaking, and writing skills was the focus. UPB needed a more highly technically trained workforce, in addition to improvements in basic skills noted by them and RBP. State financial assistance played a role in luring
these two entities into partnership, and formalized documents were used to maintain business associations. However, according to the respondents in this study, it was the establishing and cultivating of relationships, which included trust and dependence that grew these interactions into the multifaceted relationships they are today.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe, analyze, and interpret the expectations and outcomes of community college partnerships with business and industry to determine their value, emerging themes that have contributed to their success or demise, and whether the goals initially set forth in establishing these partnerships was achieved. This study was conducted to better understand how community college partnerships with business and industry are working, and the contributions these partnerships make to economic development.

Community college partnerships are considered highly successful by the respondents who participated in this study. Community colleges are at worksites frequently, and in some cases were housed at the worksite and/or sharing work space with the business partner. The dialogue is open, translatable, intentional, and constant. Workforce development areas within community colleges speak the same language as business and industry.

Community colleges provide research strength for their business partners. Factual data enabled partners the ability to better strategize when it came to staffing needs, and employee skill competencies. Regional talent assessments were developed and administered by the community colleges. Community colleges' involvement and
interactions with regional and state support structures (e.g., economic development, state policy boards, workforce development committees, and the like) provide forecasting data to business partners so they are aware of potential challenges in filling needed positions. Trending and analysis were executed using regional data, and national statistics.

Community colleges offered cost effective interventions to business partners. State aid helped offset training costs. Community colleges have pre-established programs with structures designed to increase basic skills knowledge, test competency, and upgrade technology skills in many areas. Partnering industries gained assistance to train and re-tool their workforce. Additionally, philanthropic gifts helped to stimulate community college development, which provided opportunities for program and facility expansion. Community colleges can effectively respond to industry quick-to-market needs thereby allowing business continuation.

This study added to the research gap on community college partnerships with business and industry by highlighting that, although the interest in partnerships may be enticed by state aid, partnerships are cultivated by the personal relationships that develop between the decision-makers.
REFERENCES


132

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142

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144


APPENDIX A
INDUSTRY INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What are your organization’s strategic goals?

2. What are the organization’s objectives for the partnership with the Workforce Department at the community college?
   a. What needs was the partnership to initially address?
   b. What were the formalized issues listed in the agreement that brought about your organization’s relationship with the community college?

3. How are the partnerships working for your industry?
   a. What are you getting out of it?
   b. What are the benefits?
   c. What things are not working well?

4. What dynamics of these partnerships would you change? What lessons for future partnerships can be learned from the experiences of these existing partnerships?

5. How does the economic development climate in the geographies you service impact a need for your organization to form partnerships?
APPENDIX B

COMMUNITY COLLEGE INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What are your community college’s strategic goals?

2. What are the college’s objectives for the partnership with industry?
   a. What needs was the partnership to initially address?
   b. What were the formalized issues listed in the agreement that brought about your college’s relationship with this particular industry?

3. How are the partnerships working for your community college?
   a. What are you getting out of it?
   b. What are the benefits?
   c. What things are not working well?

4. What dynamics of these partnerships would you change? What lessons for future partnerships can be learned from the experiences of these existing partnerships?

5. How does the economic development climate in the geographies you service impact a need for your organization to form partnerships?
APPENDIX C

EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE TO
POTENTIAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTICIPANTS

You are invited to participate in a study on community college and industry partnerships as a solution for workforce development. This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership through Western Michigan University.

You are being asked to volunteer as a participant because of your key role as a leader in workforce development at a community college. If you choose to participate in this study, you will attend a one- to two-hour interview session at your institution where you will be asked questions regarding the strategic goals and objectives for both entities, how are the partnerships working for the community college, what lessons for future partnerships can be learned from the experiences of these existing partnerships, and how does the economic development climate in the geographies you service impact a need for your organization to form partnerships?

You may also be asked to attend an additional session or to participate in a follow-up telephone conversation one day following the in-person interview, if clarification of your interview response is necessary. Email correspondence will also be used to communicate with you throughout the study as well as to clarify information and share research findings.
This study will be restricted to universities in the Western Michigan area. However, your interview responses are strictly confidential. This means that your name or other identifiable information will not appear on any papers on which information is recorded. Fictitious names will be used and your position and place of employment will be described generically.

The investigator in this study is Maryann Lavender (269-341-3195). The supervising professor is Dr. Charles Warfield (269-397-3890). If you have any questions, you may contact either of us.

I will be contacting you via phone within the next week to discuss your possible voluntary participation in this study. Should you agree to participate, and if the answer of “yes” is given to participate, I will mail you two consent forms; one will require your signature and should be returned to me prior to the interview. The second copy will be for you to retain for your personal records. In addition, you will receive an interview guide so you can be fully prepared to respond to the interview questions.

Thank you for considering possible participation in this study. The results of this study should be of interest to community college workforce departments and industries who partner with these academic solutions for the furtherance of research in the areas of economic and workforce development.
APPENDIX D

EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE TO
POTENTIAL INDUSTRY PARTICIPANTS

You are invited to participate in a study on community college and industry partnerships as a solution for workforce development. This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership through Western Michigan University.

You are being asked to volunteer as a participant because of your key role as a business leader with industry partnerships facilitated through the community college nexus. If you choose to participate in this study, you will attend a one- to two-hour interview session at your institution where you will be asked questions regarding the strategic goals and objectives for both entities, how are the partnerships working for the community college, what lessons for future partnerships can be learned from the experiences of these existing partnerships, and how does the economic development climate in the geographies you service impact a need for your organization to form partnerships? You may also be asked to attend an additional session or to participate in a follow-up telephone conversation one day following the in-person interview, if clarification of your interview response is necessary. Email correspondence will also be used to communicate with you throughout the study as well as to clarify information and share research findings.
This study will be restricted to universities in the Western Michigan area. However, your interview responses are strictly confidential. This means that your name will not appear on any papers on which information is recorded. Fictitious names will be used and your position and place of employment will be described generically.

The investigator in this study is Maryann Lavender (269-341-3195). The supervising professor is Dr. Charles Warfield (269-397-3980). If you have any questions, you may contact either of us.

I will be contacting you via phone within the next week to discuss your possible voluntary participation in this study. Should you agree to participate, and if the answer of “yes” is given to participate, I will send you two consent forms; one will require your signature and should be returned to me prior to the interview. The second copy will be for you to retain for your personal records. In addition, you will receive an interview guide so you can be fully prepared to respond to the interview questions.

Thank you for considering possible participation in this study. The results of this study should be of interest to community college workforce departments and industries who partner with these academic solutions for the furtherance of research in the areas of economic and workforce development.
APPENDIX E

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY

Western Michigan University Department of: Teaching, Learning, and Leadership

Principal Investigator: Charles Warfield

Student Investigator: Maryann Lavender

You have been invited to participate in a research project entitled Community College and Industry Partnerships. This research is intended to study how community colleges serve as a nexus for economic and workforce development for business and industry. This study is being completed as Maryann Lavender's dissertation project.

You will be asked to attend a one- to two-hour private session with Maryann Lavender. The date and time for this session will be chosen by you and convenient to your daily work schedule. You will be asked to meet Maryann for this session at your private office or in a campus conference room. The session will involve an interview regarding the purposes of initiating community college and industry partnerships and value assessment questions that will aid in clarifying pros and cons of these types of collaborations. These sessions will be audio taped. If clarification regarding interview responses is deemed necessary, you may be asked to attend a second interview session or to participate in a follow-up telephone interview. Email communications will also be used to clarify responses as well as to verify accuracy in reporting responses.
Your consent for Maryann to access and analyze pertinent documents that were developed to establish partnerships and used to guide expectations toward desired outcomes is also requested. Examples of appropriate document types for review would include partnership contracts, human resource strategy and recruitment needs, line of business turnover statistics, current hiring policies and practices, and plans for workforce development.

As in all research, there may be unforeseen risks to the participant. For example, one potential risk of participation in this project is that you may be uncomfortable responding to information about your un-published information regarding organization’s strategic goals that could be sensitive in nature. However, Maryann will take great care in keeping your identity confidential in the reporting of data collected in this study. Only the Principal Investigator and the researcher will have access to participant responses. The data will not be distinguishable from other responses or data was received, which protects the participant’s anonymity. Fictitious names will be used and positions and places of employment will be reported in a generic manner.

All of the information collected from you is confidential. That means that your name will not appear on any papers on which this information is recorded. The forms will all be coded, and Maryann will keep a separate master list with the names of participants and the corresponding code numbers. Once the data are collected and analyzed, the master list will be destroyed. All other forms will be retained for at least three years in a locked file in the principal investigator’s office.
One way you may benefit from this activity is having the chance to talk about your experience in community college and industry partnerships as sourcing solutions for various lines of businesses within your organization. Other business leaders who are responsible for workforce development may benefit from the knowledge that is gained from this research and it may help in understanding these types of partnerships.

You may refuse to participate or quit at any time during the study without prejudice or penalty. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact either Maryann Lavender at 269-341-3195 or Charles Warfield at 269-387-3596. You may also contact the chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the vice president for research at 269-387-8298 with any concerns that you have.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is more than one year old.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and/or had explained to you the purpose and requirements of the study and that you agree to participate.

________________________________________________  ______________________
Signature                          Date

Consent obtained by: ________________________________________________

158
In preparation for our in-person interview on (insert interview date), I would like to request a review of pertinent documents that were developed to establish partnerships and used to guide expectations toward desired outcomes. Examples of appropriate document types for review would include partnership contracts, human resource strategy and recruitment needs, line of business turnover statistics, current hiring policies and practices, and plans for workforce development. Please contact me with any questions or concerns regarding the review of these documents.
Memo

To: [Click here and type name]
From: Maryann Lavender
CC: Western Michigan University HSIRB
Date: June 4, 2007
Re: Community College and Industry Partnership Interview - Reminder

I am sending an email memo notification to remind of the in-person interview scheduled for:

Day:
Date:
Time:
Location:

This interview is regarding my dissertation research study on community college and industry partnerships as a solution for workforce development. The focus of this research initiative is to better understand how these relationships impact economic and workforce development.

Thank you.

160
Hello (Participant’s Name):

This is Maryann Lavender, doctoral candidate at Western Michigan University. I am conducting a follow up telephone call from our in-person interview yesterday to ensure that our interviewing session is complete.

I have reviewed the tape recorded interview, and I do not have any follow up questions. However, before I leave (insert name of site or organizations), I wanted to make to ensure that you were able to complete your thoughts regarding the questions that were posed to you.

(Participant’s name), thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to participate in my dissertation research study on community college and industry partnerships.

Once all of the data has been collected, I will forward you a transcript, via email, of our interview for your review.

Thank you,

Maryann Lavender
APPENDIX I

HSIRB APPROVAL LETTER

Date: November 21, 2006

To: Charles Warfield, Principal Investigator  
Maryann Lavender, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 06-08-08

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "An Examination of Industry and Community College Partnerships as Sources for Economic Development" has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: November 21, 2007